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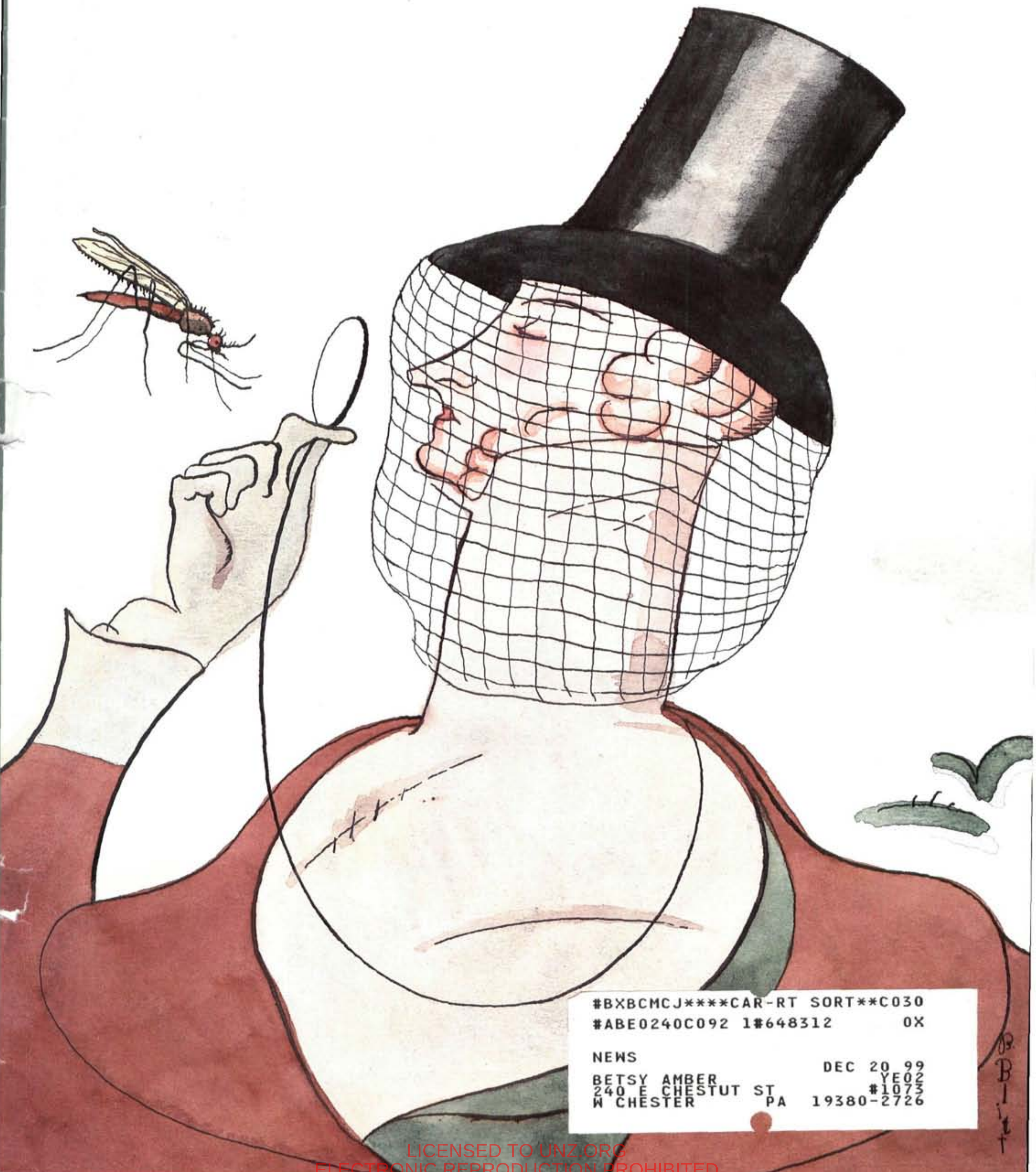

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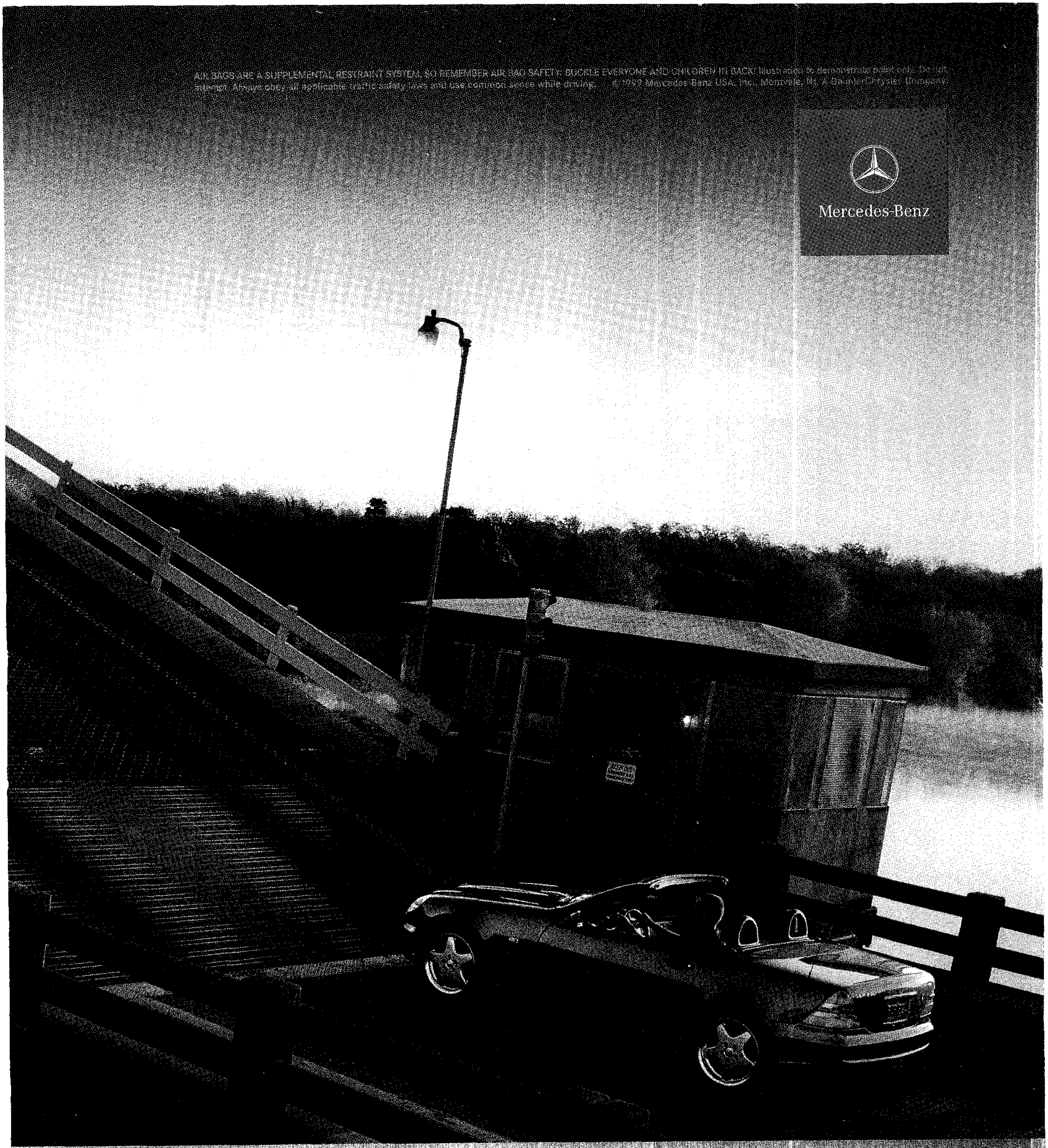

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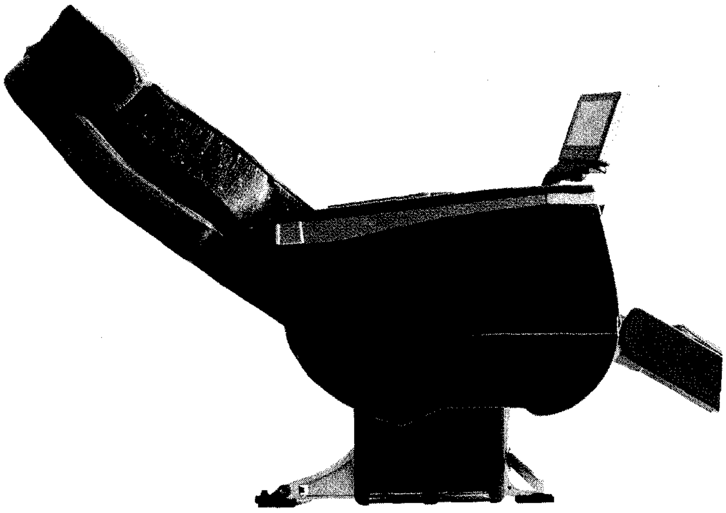

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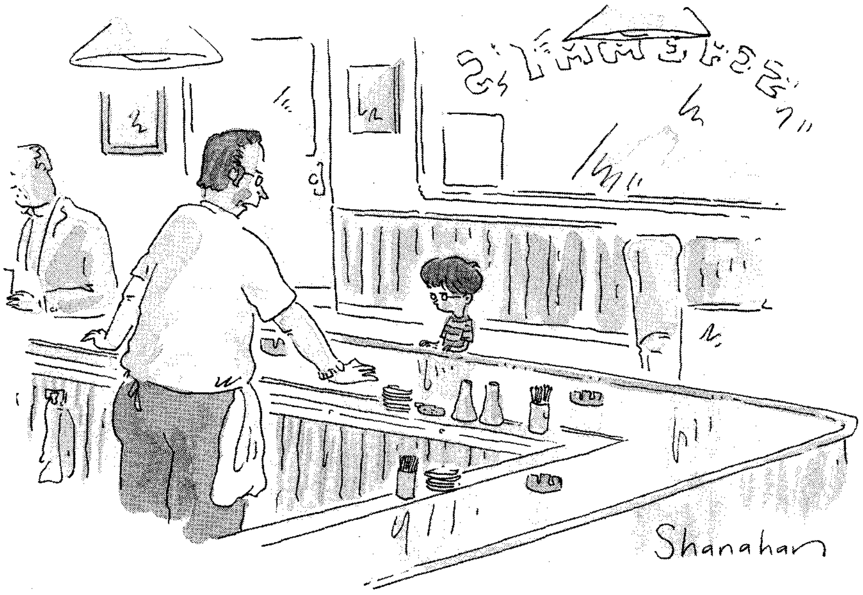

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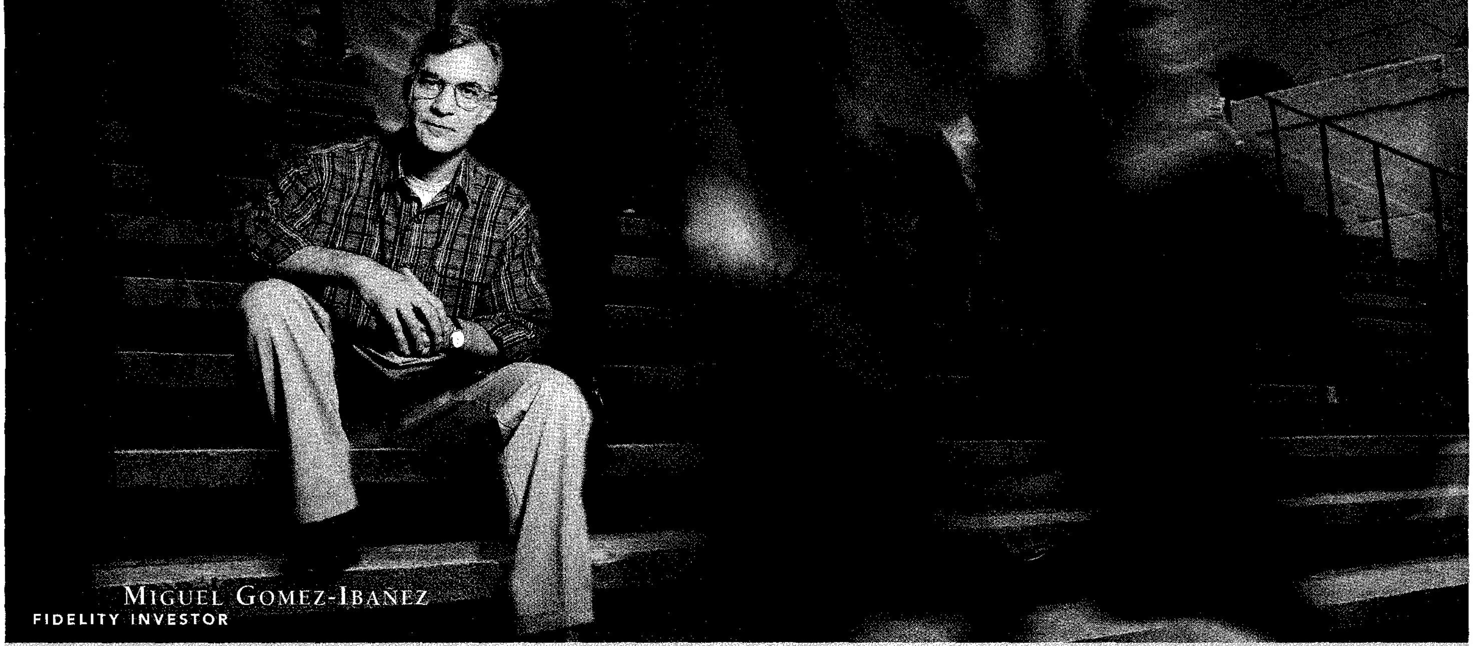

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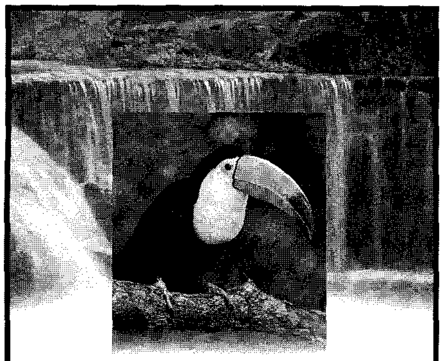

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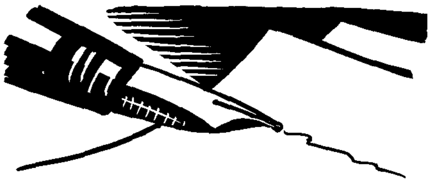

QUALITIES OF LIFE

Michael Specter's article on the utilitarian-inspired ethicist Peter Singer ("The Dangerous Philosopher," September 6th) pointed out for me the differences that exist between doing ethics from a point of view that God exists and doing ethics without any consideration of the existence of God. Many who believe in God believe that men and women are created for conversation with God and that is what sets humanity apart from the rest of the natural world. It is this conversation with God that makes every human—including those who are most disadvantaged by poverty or disability—fundamentally different from other creatures and worthy of special treatment and consideration.

STEPHEN L. WHITE
Princeton, N.J.

It is unfortunate that twenty-four years after the Karen Ann Quinlan case, which led to the legal, moral, and religious recognition of the right to terminate useless medical treatment, Michael Specter refers to that same practice as "killing." Choosing to withdraw medical treatment when there is no potential to remedy a patient's condition is simply an acknowledgment that the patient will never recover. Such behavior is not killing. It is accepting the limits of medicine: not all diseases or physical problems can be cured, and we all will die.

THOMAS A. SHANNON
Worcester, Mass.

Until we can answer with certainty the question of what happens after death, we cannot realistically draw any comfort from choosing death over a life of suffering, as Peter Singer's utilitarian analyses often advise. Choosing to withhold treatment from a suffering relative may serve to provide us, those who are left alive, with some comfort. But if we are honest with ourselves, we may find that we do not actually care about the "quality of life" of other human beings, but only the quality of our own lives, since it is improved when the suffering are out of sight.

JANN FORTH
Healdsburg, Calif.

WHO'S PLAYING WHOM?

Perhaps it was too obvious to mention, but nowhere in Nicholas Fox Weber's fascinating article on the painter Balthus and his painting "The Guitar Lesson" ("The Balthus Enigma," September 6th) did Weber note that the teacher appears to be playing her student as one would play a guitar. This enriches Weber's insight that the painting might be a self-portrait: Balthus is revealed as a master manipulator, the girl representing only an instrument to him. Perhaps this interpretation reflects solely on Balthus's attitude toward the young women he used as models, but the article made me wonder if that sentiment might be a theme throughout Balthus's life. The painter's unhappiness with his work may therefore be due to the exposure of this manipulation: when a lie is exposed, the truth may not be as embarrassing as the existence of the artifice in the first place.

BEN LEE
Austin, Tex.

To illustrate the difficulty of accurately reconstructing the past, Balthus tells Nicholas Fox Weber a story about Francis Bacon, who abandoned his history of mankind after discovering that his version of a murder he witnessed from his window differed from the versions of the other onlookers. Ironically, Balthus's anecdote is more apt than he supposed: the writer in question is not Bacon, but Sir Walter Raleigh, who began his "History of the World" in the Tower of London only to later abandon it. Furthermore, the story itself is apocryphal: Raleigh abandoned his book because Prince Henry, whom he was writing it for, died. Raleigh's unfinished book was later published in 1614, four years before its author went to the block.

PETER DREYER
Charlottesville, Va.

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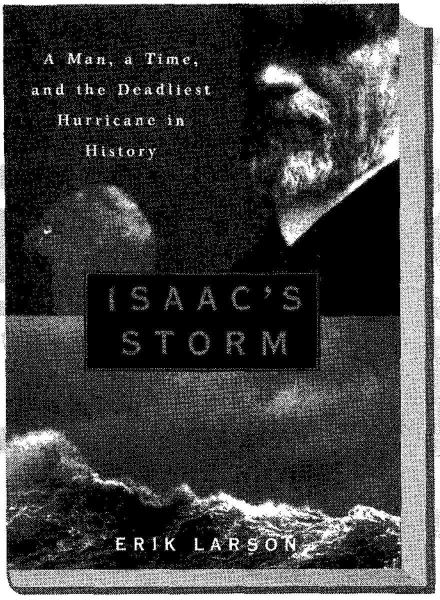

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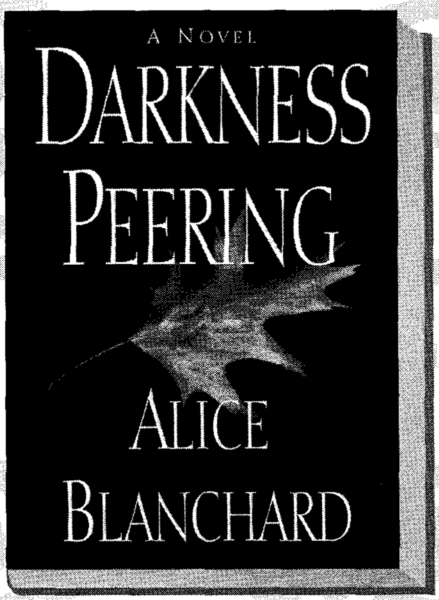

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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Ancestral Voices—A staged reading, with a rotating cast, of A. R. Gurney's play, in which a Buffalo grandmother disrupts her family when she divorces her husband to marry his best friend. The first cast: David Aaron Baker, Philip Bosco, Blythe Danner, Edward Herrmann, and Elizabeth Wilson. Sundays at 7:30 and Mondays at 8. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Big Blonde—Dorothy Parker's short story, adapted for the stage by Peter Mattaliano, who also directs, and starring Jennifer Spahr. Opens Sept. 23 at 7. (113 Gallery, 113 Ludlow St., between Delancey and Rivington Sts. 253-1813.)

Chekhov Now Festival—A three-week celebration offering contemporary stagings of twenty-one of the playwright's works, including a hip-hop version of "Uncle Vanya" set in Harlem, puppet adaptations of two short stories, and a rock-and-roll adaptation of "Ivanov." Opens Sept. 22 at 7 and continues through Oct. 10. (Access Theatre, 380 Broadway, near White St. 414-7773.)

The Clearing—The Blue Light Theatre Company's season opener is a drama by Helen Edmundson, set in Ireland during Oliver Cromwell's occupation and concerning the marriage of an English aristocrat and his Irish wife. Previews begin Sept. 24. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 279-4200.)

Contact—A dance-play about romantic dreams, told in three parts and set to the music of Stéphane Grappelli, Puccini, Benny Goodman, the Beach Boys, and the Squirrel Nut Zippers, among other musicians and composers. Co-conceived by Susan Stroman (choreography and direction) and John Weidman (book). In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The Country Club—From the Drama Dept., a new comedy by Douglas Carter Beane, about a group of burned-out Wasps in their thirties, who gather during eleven holidays over the course of a year. In previews. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 541-8441.)

Dame Edna: The Royal Tour—Calling all possums: the singer, swami, grief counsellor, and children's book illustrator makes her Broadway début. In previews. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Epic Proportions—Kristin Chenoweth heads the cast of a new comedy by Larry Coen and David Crane, set in the thirties in the Arizona desert, during the filming of a Hollywood Biblical epic. Jerry Zaks is the director. In previews. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Fully Committed—New York's most fashionable restaurant is the setting for Becky Mode's comedy, in which an unemployed actor turned reservations clerk must cope with the crowd vying for a table. Nicholas Martin is the director. In previews. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3366.)

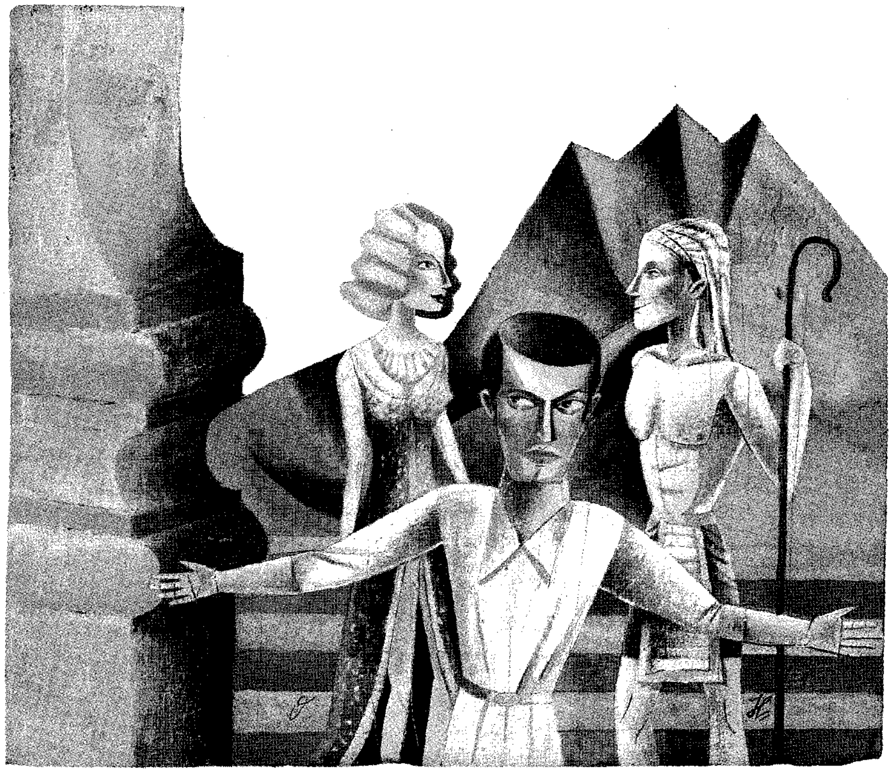
Give Me Your Answer, Do!—Brian Friel's latest play, which centers on the rivalry between two writers. The cast includes Kate Burton, Helen Carey, Michael Emerson, John Glover, Gawn Grainger, Joel Grey, and Lois Smith. In previews. Presented by the Roundabout. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

Invasions and Legacies—Tommy Makem, in an evening of Irish folk songs and storytelling. Opens Sept. 27 at 8 and continues through Oct. 9. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

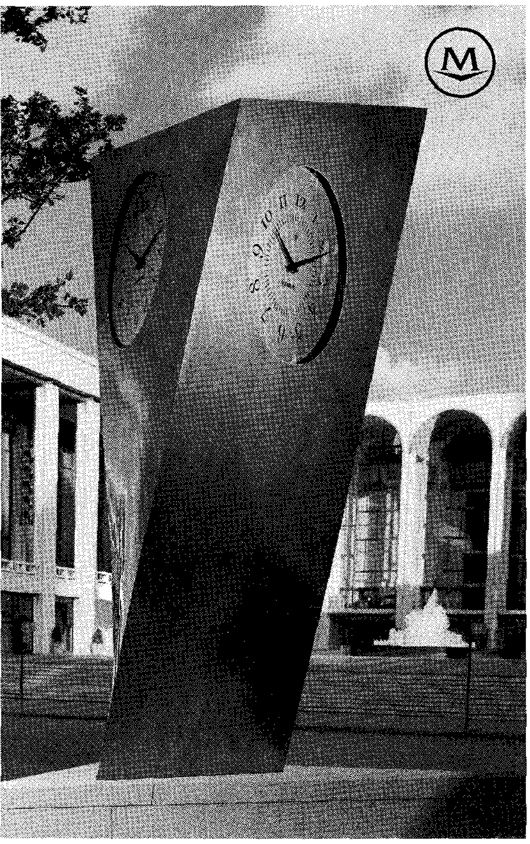
La Mama—Sept. 23-25 at 10 and Sept. 26 at 5: A revival of Michael McClure's "The Beard," directed by Lawrence Sacharow. Continues through Oct. 10. . . . ¶ Sept. 23-25 at 8 and Sept. 26 at 3:30: "Roman Ruins," a play incorporating poetry, dance, and video, from the French *moins que rien* ("less than nothing") movement. Continues through Oct. 3. . . . ¶ Sept. 23-25 at 7:30 and Sept. 26 at 3 and 7:30: "End of the Rope," an experimental play that draws on trapeze, rock-climbing, nautical, and circus arts to tell a fable about a lost tribe of aerialists. Continues through Oct. 10. (74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

Mirandolina—The Pearl Theatre Company opens the season with Goldoni's "La Locandiera," in which four suitors compete for the hand of a Florentine boarding-house owner, in a new translation by Michael Feingold. In previews. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

Nuyorican Stories: Culture Clash in the City—The comedy troupe Culture Clash (Richard Montoya, Ric Salinas, and Herbert Siguenza) sends up New York art and politics of the past three decades, in an exploration of the lives of several well-known Puerto



Larry Coen and David Crane's "Epic Proportions," at the Helen Hayes.



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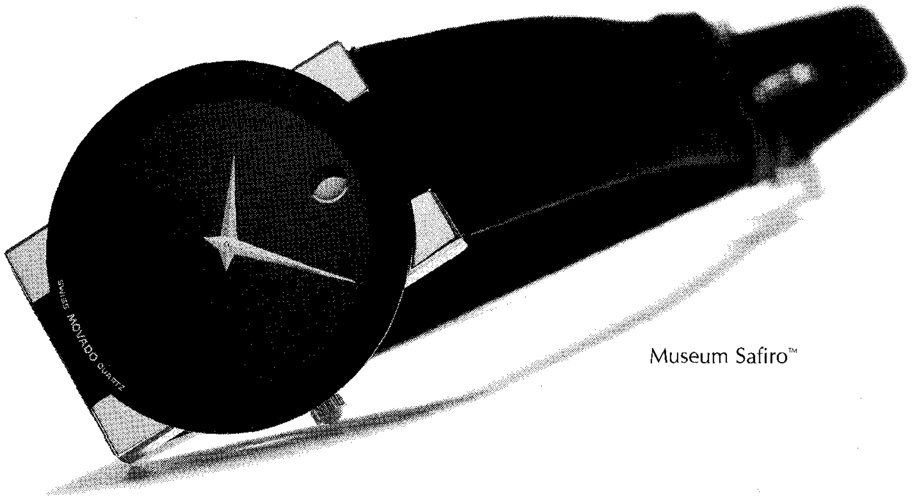

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Rican, Chicano, and African-American citizens. Previews begin Sept. 22. (INTAR 53, 508 W. 53rd St. 279-4200.)

Signature Theatre Company—The Maria Irene Fornes season begins with two one-acts, "Mud" and "Drowning," directed by David Esbjornson. In previews through Sept. 25. Opens Sept. 26 at 6:45. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

Sundays Out of Country—A cocktail party turns into a revealing series of play readings, in a comedy of manners by Judy Elkan. Opens Sept. 23 at 8 and runs through Oct. 17. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

The Vagina Monologues—Eve Ensler, in her one-woman disquisition. In previews. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

Varla Jean Merman Is the Bad Seedling!—The TWEED Fractured Classicks series presents Ms. Merman (a.k.a. Jeffery T. Roberson) as the darkly naughty eight-year-old Rhonda Skidmore, in a musical parody of the Maxwell Anderson drama "The Bad Seed." Previews begin Sept. 23. (Mother, 432 W. 14th St. 358-3436.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Avenue A—The 29th Street Rep's production of David Steen's drama about the effects of urban decay. (212 W. 29th St. 465-0575.)

The Beauty Part—S. J. Perelman's 1962 comedy, set in nineteen-fifties New York and Hollywood, about the aristocrat Lance Weatherwax and his pursuit of a bohemian girl. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 591-0564.)

The Countess—Gregory Murphy's play, which tells the story of how the nineteenth-century art critic John Ruskin's wife left him for the painter John Everett Millais, is a vivid exploration of the self-indulgent pleasures of small-mindedness (in this case, Ruskin's and his parents'). The script is funny and intelligent, if a bit overlong, and the cast does a wonderful job of revealing the characters' complete inability to communicate with—or even understand—each other, personally or artistically. Jennifer Woodward is particularly strong as Mrs. Ruskin, in a portrayal of the depths of passion and despair it can take to break free. Directed by Ludovica Villar-Hauser, with luxurious period costumes by Christopher Lione. (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 594-2826.)

The Exact Center of the Universe—Joan Vail Thorne's comedy, in which a small-town Southerner (Reed Birney) is torn between his overbearing mother (Frances Sternhagen) and his sweetheart (Tracy Thorne). (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

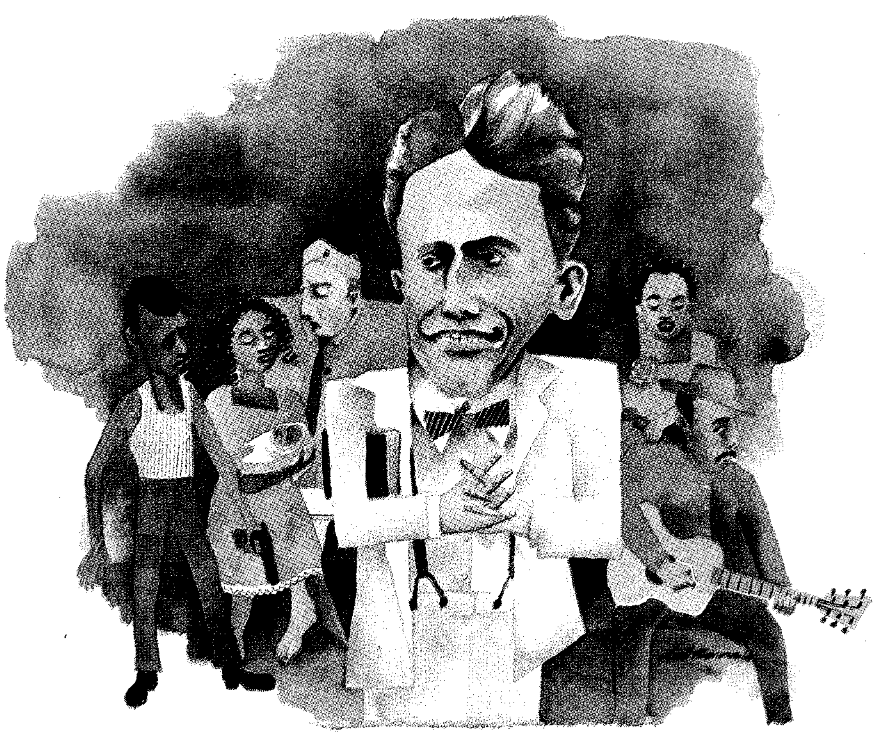
The Gathering—A Shabbat dinner set during the spring of Reagan's controversial visit to Bitburg (the German cemetery where, it is believed, Nazi soldiers are buried) turns into political crossfire between a Dachau survivor (Ben Hammer) and his son (Robert Fass), who is a speechwriter for the President. It could have been a sombre, if not overly burdened, affair, were it not for the comic tone of the tightly scripted first act. The mood slows to a more ponderous pace in the second. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 239-6200.)

Kat and the Kings—A rock-and-roll musical by Taliep Petersen and David Kramer, set in Cape Town in 1957, about a doo-wop group trying to make it big. Mr. Kramer is the director. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Monster—The Toronto troupe da da kamera comes to P.S. 122 with Daniel MacIvor's one-man play, in which he portrays multiple characters in a series of intertwined horror tales. Sept. 23-26 at 7:30. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

The Right Size—The British comedy duo of Sean Foley and Hamish McColl bring their West End hit, "Do You Come Here Often?," to P.S. 122. (Reviewed in this issue.) (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes Oct. 10.)

A Streetcar Named Desire—Elizabeth Marvel portrays Blanche DuBois, in Ivo van Hove's staging of Tennessee Williams's play. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes Oct. 10.)



David Greenspan has joined the cast of "Whoa-Jack!"—Jeff Cohen's Deep South adaptation of Büchner's "Woyzeck"—for an encore staging at Davis Hall.

EDWARD DEL ROSARIO

Summer '69—A revue tracing a group of music fans' trip to the original Woodstock festival. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Things You Shouldn't Say Past Midnight—Peter Ackerman's screwball bedroom comedy consists mainly of a sublimely ridiculous conference call involving three pairs of lovers. The questions about sex and the proper balance between intellectual and physical attraction have no answers, but Ackerman has some interesting suggestions, and, to his credit, comedy outweighs the theorizing. John Rando, the director, has a good eye, and the show comes off beautifully. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Thwak—Comic acrobatics (both physical and vocal) from the Australian performers David Collins and Shane Dundas, a.k.a. the Umbilical Brothers. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

Voices in the Dark—In this age of computer-generated gore, the actress Judith Ivey, playwright John Pielmeier ("Agnes of God"), and director Christopher Ashley have achieved the impossible, a truly thrilling stage thriller. It's a classic plot: Ivey plays a radio-talk-show host who gets a call from a wacko, then heads off to an isolated cabin for a peaceful weekend—oops! Ivey and the writing are smart and funny, and the scares are both unanticipated and really scary; the plot includes some nice twists, and the supporting cast carry the whole thing off with style. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

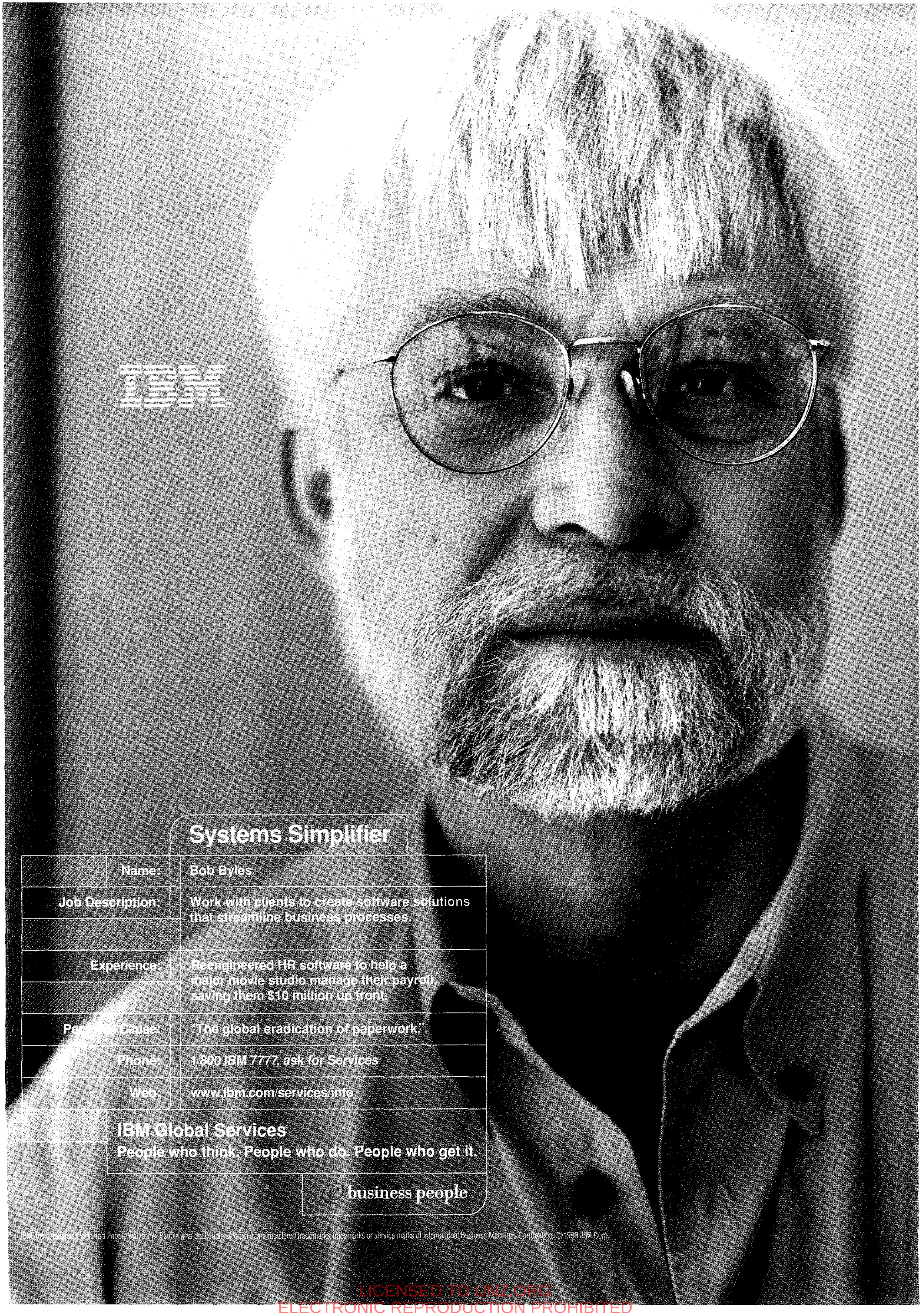
The Weir—Conor McPherson's play takes place in the musty chill of a backwater Irish pub, where a handful of habitués chew the cud of their solitude, spinning ghostly yarns. It has a bittersweet charm, but for all the well-crafted talk and the well-observed bonhomie, it is finally a shaggy-bog story. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/12/99.) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Whoa-Jack!—David Greenspan and Queen Esther have joined the cast of the Worth Street Theatre's encore staging of a drama by Jeff Cohen, set on a Southern Army base during the civil-rights movement. (Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. 650-7148.)

The Winds of God—Two contemporary Tokyo comedians killed in a motorcycle wreck are reincarnated as Second World War kamikaze pilots, in a comedy by Masayuki Imai, who co-stars. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN: Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DEATH OF A SALESMAN:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOOTLOOSE:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **FOSSE:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **IT AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT THE BLUES:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SIDE MAN:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **WIT:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.



Systems Simplifier

Name:	Bob Byles
Job Description:	Work with clients to create software solutions that streamline business processes.
Experience:	Reengineered HR software to help a major movie studio manage their payroll, saving them $10 million up front.
Personal Cause:	"The global eradication of paperwork."
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DANCE

Dance Theatre of Harlem—The company marks its thirtieth anniversary with performances of repertory works by Balanchine (“Bugaku,” “The Four Temperaments,” and “The Prodigal Son”) and by founder Arthur Mitchell (“Firebird Finale” and “Manifestations”), as well as newer pieces and premières by Geoffrey Holder, Dwight Rhoden, and resident choreographer Robert Garland. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Sept. 21-24 and Sept. 28 at 8, Sept. 25 at 2, and Sept. 26 at 3 and 7:30. Through Oct. 3.)

Dance Theatre Workshop—Sept. 21-22 at 8: David Parker and the Bang Group in “Beatification.” (Through Oct. 10.) . . . ¶ Sept. 23 at 8 and Sept. 24 at 7: Ellis Wood and her company in “Home for the Naked.” (Through Oct. 3.) . . . ¶ Sept. 25 at 8 and Sept. 26 at 3: Gabri Christa and Cynthia Oliver in “Lukosimad.” . . . ¶ Sept 28-29 at 8: Jean Vitrano in “Love's Body” and Nami Yamamoto in “H(a)i.” (Through Oct. 8.) (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

Bill Young and Dancers—The six-member company presents two works (“Fault” and “Again, Then Soar”) drawing on personal histories, created by the choreographer in collaboration with his dancers. Both are set to scores by the composer Mio Morales. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Sept. 23 and Sept. 25-26 at 8:30.)

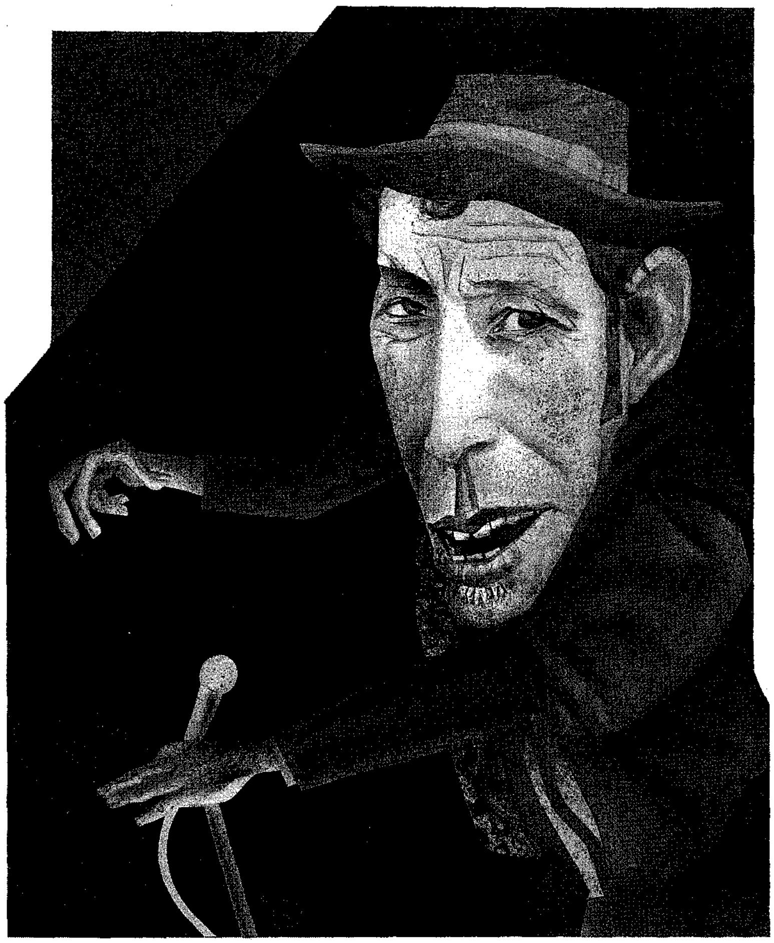
"Dancescaping"—A site-specific outdoor work, performed in and inspired by the landscape of La Plaza Cultural Community Garden, whose grounds boast several prodigious weeping-willow trees. (Avenue C at 9th St. 501-2429. Sept. 25-26 at 5:30.)

"Dances in Shabby Black"—Works by Beverly Blossom, including “Dad's Ties,” created with a few dozen of the title accessories found in the choreographer's closet, and “Bésame Mucho,” a tango Blossom performs while dressed as a man on one side and a woman on the other. (Context, 28 Avenue A, at 2nd St. 953-0651. Sept. 24-25 at 8.)

"Lava Love"—Sarah East Johnson's troupe, Lava, presents a slate of circus-skill routines—trapeze and balancing acts, hoop diving, human pyramids, hula-hoop and pogo-stick numbers—performed with subtleties of pace and emphasis taken from the world of dance. Johnson likes to compare both the power of women and the dynamics of love to volcanic forces, but she keeps such themes subterranean. Adults sense the undercurrent of muscular eroticism, kids love the dog act. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. 226-0051. Sept 23-24 at 8 and Sept. 25-26 at 3 and 8. Through Oct. 2.)

Pilar Rioja—Final performances from the marquesa of Spanish dance, who offers a valuable lesson in the regional variations of the form. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Sept. 22 and Sept. 26 at 7, Sept 24 at 8, and Sept. 25 at 3.)

"The Bessies"—The performance artist John Kelly and the choreographer Ann Carlson host the New York Dance and Performance Awards. In the past few years, hosts such as Mark Dendy and Doug Elkins distinguished themselves in front of a tough audience—their peers—so this time out the standards for shtick are high. In addition to Kelly and Carlson, the Joe Goode Performance Group performs an excerpt from “Deeply There,” and the soloist Mary Overlie offers her “Locations of Love.” In between entertainments, invited luminaries (Elizabeth Streb, Douglas Dunn, Jaime Martinez, et al.) hand out approximately twenty awards, and the unsuspecting award winners generally deliver unguarded and uncensored acceptance speeches. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 691-6500. Sept. 24 at 7.)



Tom Waits, at the Beacon Theatre.

NIGHT LIFE

Backstreet Boys—America's favorite teenybop outfit had a brief scare this spring when 'N Sync, its practically indistinguishable rival, overtook the group on the charts. Then came the quintet's latest opus, “Millennium,” which has now sold seven million copies, making it the premier drain on the average adolescent's allowance. (Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands. 212-307-7171. Sept. 23-24 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Nassau Coliseum. 516-794-9300. Sept. 26-27 at 7:30.)

Lana Cantrell—The sixties singing sensation turned entertainment lawyer, backed by the Australian Youth Choir and Newark Boys Chorus. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 23 at 8.)

Juliette Greco—A rare New York City appearance by the great French vocalist. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. Sept. 23 and Sept. 25 at 8.)

Tom Waits—Having survived the indignity of Jewel misspelling his name in her infamous poetry collection (Tom Waites), Waits quietly reëmerged last May with “Mule Variations,” his first record in six years, a project *Newsweek* went so far as to call “more Dylan than Dylan.” Waits's rasp is still capable of curing the most inveterate smoker, but, like mentholated cigarettes, it's a highly addictive taste. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Sept. 23-25 and Sept. 27 at 8.)

The Sisters of Mercy—This seminal goth outfit returns from a long hiatus in some dank British cave to sing angst-ridden anthems to alabaster-faced young fans. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Sept. 24 at 7:30.)

"All-Jobim"—A night of bossa nova, with Brazilian singers Simone and João Bosco, saxophonist Michael Brecker, and others. (See also Classical Music.) (Carnegie Hall. Sept. 24 at 8.)

Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris—As two of the most talented vocal interpreters working the fringes of the pop form, these two grandes dames have explored everything from Sinatra-style orchestration (Ronstadt's forays with the late Nelson Riddle) to post-modern production (Harris made “Wrecking Ball,” perhaps her best record, with the producer Daniel Lanois). They recently joined forces for “Western Wall: The Tucson Sessions,” and live they promise to outshine the tight drama of that finely honed album. (Beacon Theatre. Sept. 26 at 8.)

CLUBS

(Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

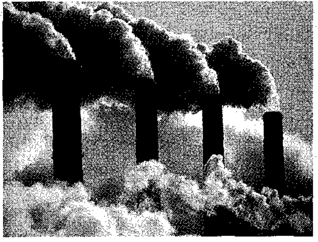
Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Sept. 27: Cuban singer **ELIADES OCHOA,** a veteran of the Buena Vista Social Club, stops by with his own group, El Cuarteto Patria. Ochoa's new release, “Sublime Illusion,” is a fine showcase for his rich voice, but the stage is his best milieu.

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Sept. 23-24: **SINEAD LOHAN.** A few years ago, this singer-songwriter from Cork cut her teeth with the girls of Lilith Fair, but now she's gathered enough of a devoted following to headline her own shows. Sept. 26: Singers and guitarists Catherine Ann Irwin and Janet Beveridge Bean started the brainy country outfit **FREAKWATER** a decade ago. Along the way, they picked up bassist David Wayne Gray and earned a well-deserved reputation for eerie harmonies and mordant songwriting. Freakwater's sixth album, “End Time,” adds drums and a full string section. With the Mekons' **SALLY TIMMS.** Sept. 27: Cutesy-pie Scottish pop with **BIS.**

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Sept. 25: Chuck Berry's former pianist **JOHNNIE JOHNSON.**

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Sept. 25: Led by Carol Lipnik, a singer with a five-octave range, **SPOOKARAMA** turns out original music rooted in the carny atmosphere of Lipnik's home, Coney Island. With **KING MISSILE III,** the band that gave the world the songs “Detachable Penis” and “Jesus Was Way Cool.” Sept. 28-29: Danish vocalist **CAECILIE NORBY.** The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Sept. 22: The New Orleans trio **BETTER THAN EZRA** became famous with plodding power chords, but its third album, “How Does Your Garden Grow?,” reaches for sonic maturity by embracing drum loops and



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more fanciful keyboard effects. Sharing the bill on Sept. 22 is **SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER.** This Austin-based trio, led by vocalist Leigh Nash, released one of the year's sweetest singles, the irresistible "Kiss Me." Sept. 27-28: The English jazz-funk collective **INCOGNITO.**

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 24: The music **DR. ISRAEL** (real name: Douglas Bennett) whips up in his Brooklyn studio is as mystifying and, ultimately, rewarding as your first pulse-quickening ride on the New York City subway. It's easy to get lost in his latest release, "Inna City Pressure." Dr. Israel switches from mind-blowing break beats to power-guitar chords, sometimes on the same track, and his dub wizardry propels roots-reggae melodies, jungle grooves, and a punk sensibility into a wicked, rumbling ride. Sept. 25: An evening with Woodstock legend (and sometime jingle singer) **RICHIE HAVENS.** With the up-and-coming folk singer **STEPHAN SMITH.** Sept. 28: Tuvan-throat-singing innovator **SAINKHO NAMTCHYLAK.**

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Sept. 25: Dark instrumental rock with **TRANS AM.**

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Sept. 25: Bahian diva **JULIANA AQUINO.** Sept. 27: The Cuban *charanga* group **ORQUESTA RITMO ORIENTAL,** making its first United States appearance in its forty-year history. Sept. 28: **VINYL VOODOO,** a program of women d.j.s. Dining.

TRAMPS, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Sept. 22-23: Reborn from the ashes of Uncle Tupelo (the same ones that gave us Wilco), **SON VOLT** features raggedy guitars, stark acoustic plucking, and cut-to-the-bone tales that made the band's début album, "Trace," a dark, down-and-out vision. Its latest release is "Wide Swing Tremolo." These are the last shows in this reliable venue, which is closing its doors.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Sept. 24: After nearly thirty years as one of the most imitated (and, lately, most sampled) instrumentalists in soul and funk history, **LEO NOCENTELLI,** the founding guitarist of New Orleans' fabled Meters, fronts his own group.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through Sept. 25: Chanteuse **MARY CLEERE HARAN** is at work in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. Dining.

BIRDLAND, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Sept. 22-23: The **MARK WHITFIELD** quartet. A young guitarist with chops to spare and a bit too much desire to prove it, Whitfield has the funky fluidity of a pre-pop George Benson and a flair for gospel and blues. Sept. 24-25: The **ANDY SUMMERS** trio. The former Police guitarist has always been a closet jazz fan, but this year he came out with "Green Chimneys," a set of revamped Thelonious Monk tunes. His sly, rhythmically unpredictable phrasings lend a convincing air to the project, and it should be a blast live. Dining.

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle features, through Oct. 9, vocalist **BARBARA COOK.** . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **PETER MINTUN** is in attendance through Oct. 9.

IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Sept. 26: The **GREG OSBY** quartet. Saxophonist Osby, a professional renegade once associated with the insurgent jazz organization M-Base, has fostered his own contingent of smart, forward-thinking players including pianist Jason Moran. With his sharp-edged tone and stuttering rhythms, Osby remains one of the least predictable and most engaging saxophonists to have emerged in the past two decades. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

JAZZ STANDARD, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Sept. 21-23: The **JEFF (TAIN) WATTS** experience. Probably the most respected and in-demand mainstream drummer, Watts has powered the bands of the Marsalis brothers, Wynton and Branford, although his allegiance remains with the latter. "Citizen Tain," Watts's major-label début, is as volatile as you'd expect, with the leader pushing hard behind his guests (which include both W. and B. Marsalis, reunited on record for the first time in almost a decade). Watts's live band will feature saxophonist **CRAIG HANDY.** Dining.

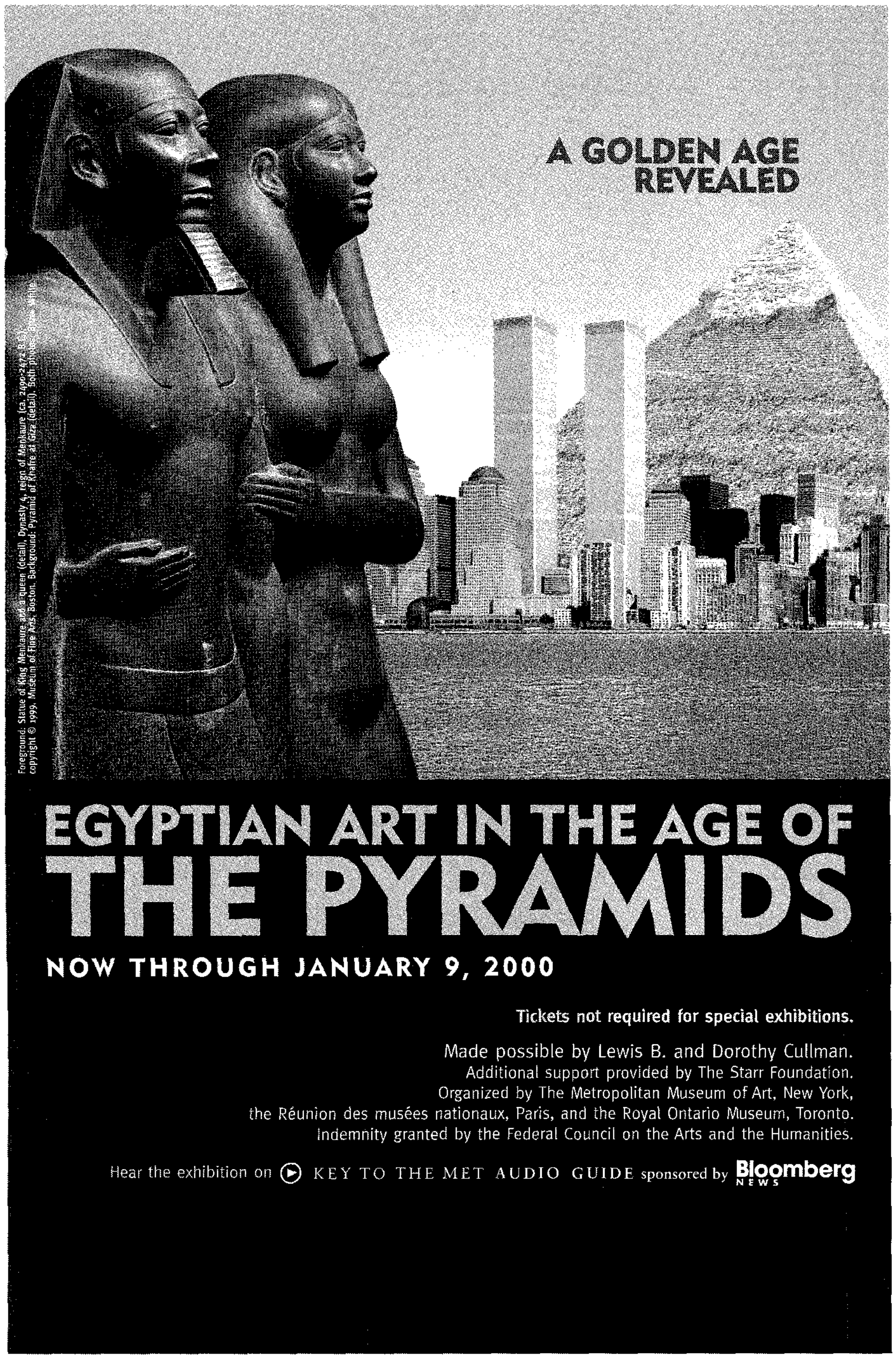
JOE'S PUB, 425 Lafayette St. (539-8770)—Sept. 26: Broadway veteran **PATTI LU PONE** stops in for a show centered on her new album of love songs, "Matters of the Heart."

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 27: Clarinettist **DON BYRON** gets freaky with his band Existential Dred, which mixes musical and sociological landmarks of his seventies youth, from funk rock to blaxploitation films, and contemporary everything-in-the-blender agit-prop humor.

S.O.B.'S, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Latin rhythms have been part of the foundation of jazz since its turn-of-the-century beginnings, so it's really no surprise that modernists from Dizzy Gillespie to saxophonist **CHICO FREEMAN** (Sept. 23) have been drawn to its more explicitly tropical elements. Freeman's Latin-jazz unit, Guataca, is stocked with veterans of this time-honored fusion, including pianist **HILTON RUIZ.** For this show, the octogenarian percussionist **CANDIDO** shares the skins with Guataca's young conga player **GIOVANNI HIDALGO.**

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Sept. 26: The **FREDDIE COLE** quartet. Cole is just so smooth. His voice floats across the room like vapor, and his gossamer piano touch transforms lightly turned phrases into silk. Unforgettable himself, Freddy's done his older brother proud. Dining.

TONIC, 107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Pianist **ANTHONY COLEMAN'S SEPHARDIC TINGE** (Sept. 22) brings to mind a Bar Mitzvah with Ellington and Monk taking turns at the piano. Sept. 23: Jazz Passengers saxophonist **ROY NATHANSON** joins Coleman for an evening of duets. Sept. 23: A mainstay of the city's new-jazz scene, saxophonist **TIM BERNE** makes



A GOLDEN AGE
REVEALED
Foreground: Statue of King Menkaure and a queen (detail), Dynasty 4, reign of Menkaure (ca. 2490-2472 B.C.) [illegible]
copyright © 1999, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Background: Pyramid of Khafre at Giza (detail). Both photos: [illegible]

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NOW THROUGH JANUARY 9, 2000

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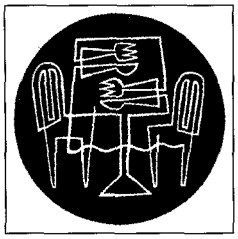
music in a skewed language all his own—fractured yet lyrical, scrupulously formal yet edgy with spontaneity. He teams up here with drummer **TOM RAINEY.** Sept. 25 at 1:30: A rare New York City appearance of the noise-jazz collective **BORBETOMAGUS.** Sept. 25: **OREN BLOEDOW,** guitarist and songwriter for indie darlings Elysian Fields, takes the stage. Sept. 28: Clarinettist **DAVID KRAKAUER,** with **CHRISTINE BARD** and **JIM PUGLIESE** on percussion. Also on Sept. 28: **ERIK FRIEDLANDER'S TOPAZ.** The jazz cellist of choice these days, Friedlander can be heard with everyone from Joe Lovano to John Zorn. Leading his own ensemble, Friedlander indulges his more experimental leanings.

TABLES FOR TWO



Good World Bar and Grill, 3 Orchard St. (925-9975)—You may feel lost on your way to this Scandinavian nesting spot, hidden deep in the roots of Orchard Street, but when you arrive you'll feel found. Past the tattered "Good World Barber Shop" awning, all the familiar downtown amenities are there: dreadlocked bartender, dried (dead) flower arrangements, mismatched wooden tables and chairs, and a dog underfoot—or perched on a barstool chewing a coaster.

It's a bar-and-grill, in that order: in a corner, behind the d.j., a throng of groovy beer-drinkers crowds around a table for six while a few intimate couples hog the two picnic tables on the back patio. The server is likely to be Scandinavian—and way too busy; studying the extensive chalkboard beer list on your way in helps. Serious connoisseurs of booze will like the berzerker, a Martini made with aquavit and served with a slice of cucumber—tasty and potent.

Sitting in a hip, noisy bar popping Swedish delicacies is the strange delight of the place. So the adventurous should resist the unique burger (on toast, with beets) and head for the toast skagen (toast fingers topped with creamy shrimp sauce) to start or, better still, the fish soup or Swedish meatballs with sweet and tart lingonberry sauce. Since it's also the kind of place where some folks just drink and smoke, the waitress needs to know from the get-go that you'll be moving on to the entrées, which are served into the wee hours. Things that sound straightforward on the daily menu—"three kinds of herring," "potato salad," "crawfish"—are really small, robust surprises, often prepared with sour cream, lingonberries, some kind of toast, or a combination thereof. And the potato pancakes, which come with thick lean bacon and lingonberry sauce or with sour cream, onions, and caviar, should not be underestimated.

For dessert, a piece of the Key-lime pie or vanilla ice cream with (you guessed it) hot lingonberry sauce is essential. If you spill a blob on your white shirt and your beleaguered waitress comes rushing out with club soda, you'll forgive the slow service and understand why you were given a blue checkered dish towel for a napkin. (Open weekdays for dinner, weekends for brunch and dinner. Entrées $8-$14.)

Up Over Jazz Cafe, 351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—Sept. 24-25: The **BILLY HARPER** quintet. The seventies had their share of Coltrane-inspired tenorists with imperious tones and volcanic energy, but something—poetry, perhaps—always set Harper apart. His recent work with Randy Weston and with his own electrifying group has proved that he's still in touch with the muse.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Jazz doesn't want for master pianists, but there's only one **TOMMY FLANAGAN,** who wraps up a two-week run on Sept. 26. Tone, touch, taste, technique—he's got it all. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinc Bar, 90 W. Houston St. (477-8337)—Sept. 21-22: The **BRIAN LYNCH** quartet. Lynch, an extroverted trumpeter with a wide-open sound, has beefed up the bands of everyone from Phil Woods to Eddie Palmieri. In an unpredictable world, his whirlwind bop is a sure thing. Saturdays and Sundays feature Brazilian jazz.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—While the Whitney prepares its paean to the second fifty years of the American century, its sister institution has put together a sombre and ravishing survey of five hundred years of the millennia of Egyptian dynasties. But not just any five hundred years; "Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids" covers the Old Kingdom (2650-2150 B.C.), the glorious formative period of Pharaonic art when the great pyramids were built and religious statuary rose to a refined naturalism. It's a big show, with more than two hundred and fifty carved stone figures and reliefs borrowed from thirty museums, but the presentation feels spare and clear. Among the most stunning pieces is a seated sumo-size figure of Hemiunu, the probable architect of the Great Pyramid of Giza, whose dimpled navel and swollen breasts are the world's earliest—and certainly most majestic—record of middle-aged spread. At the other end of the social spectrum, the show includes a few of the rare representations of ordinary Egyptians, including a potter, a butcher, and a cook glumly dropping a hoof into a cauldron of stew. Through Jan. 9. . . . ¶ As part of the run-up to the museum's exhibition of Ingres portraits, which opens Oct. 4, "Costume and Character in the Age of Ingres" gathers examples of the court fashions popular in the artist's heyday, from undergarments (chemises, corsets, petticoats, crinolines) to elaborately detailed formal wear in the sort of vibrant colors and opulent fabrics that Ingres depicted. Through Nov. 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"To be a good Abstract Expressionist painter," Robert Rauschenberg once said, "you have to be able to feel really sorry for yourself." That was something that Rauschenberg, perhaps the world's most angstless and ebullient artist, was not able to do. Instead, he began making a kind of bemused, cheerful anti-Abstract Expressionism, an art that combined the viscous freedom of Ab Ex brushwork with the astringent presence of trash and bric-a-brac. The result, as a small exhibition of his nineteen-fifties "Combine" paintings reminds us, was magic: for a few years Rauschenberg couldn't put two things together in an uninteresting way. Through Oct. 5. . . . ¶ "The Un-Private House." Through Oct. 5. . . . ¶ "Fame After Photography." Through Oct. 5. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Sun-

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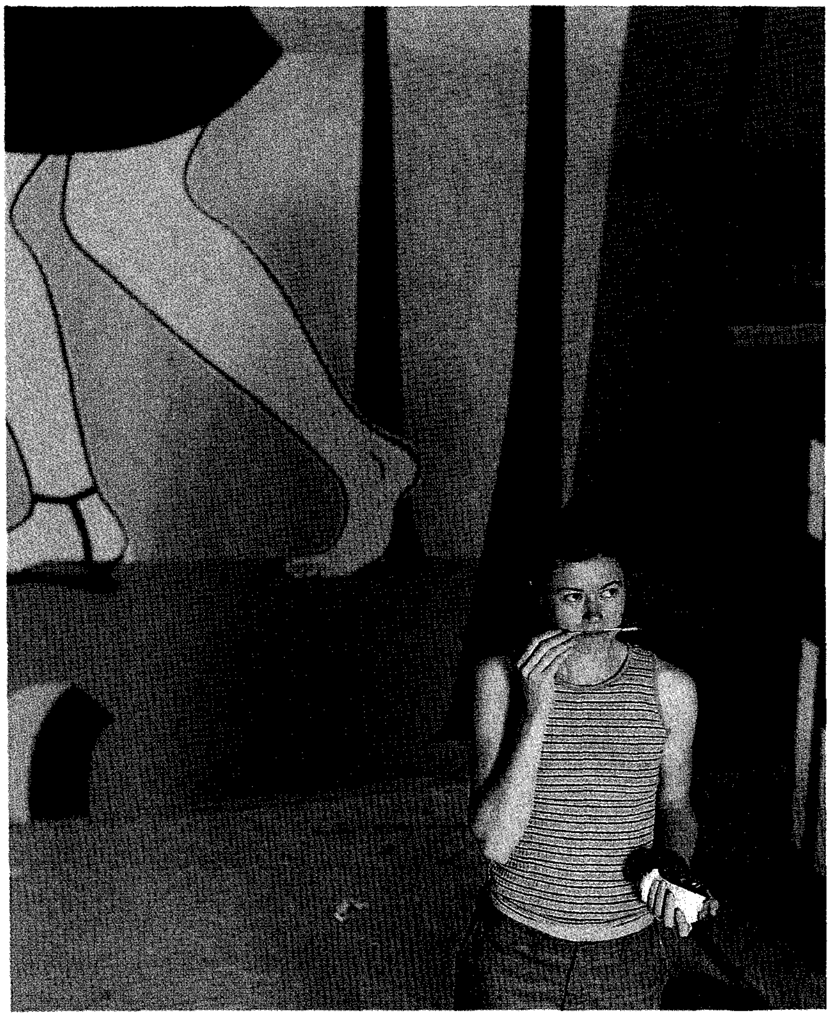

Margaret Kilgallen, pondering her installation at Deitch Projects.

days through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The second half of America's mid-career retrospective, covering art from 1950 to now, presumably, opens Sept. 26, with a list of works that will supply fodder for art-world argument for the next few months, if not the subsequent century. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—At the center of the new Gottesman Hall of Planet Earth is an eight-foot hemispherical model of our mother ship, rigged with an internal projection system that displays her clouds, oceans, and continents, all in motion. Ranged around it are a hundred and sixty-eight chunks of the planet itself. . . . ¶ "The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition." Through Oct. 11. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Winslow Homer: Illustrating America" displays a hundred and twenty wood engravings, nearly half of Homer's output during the early years of his career, when he worked as a freelance illustrator for publications like *Ballou's Pictorial* and *Harper's Weekly.* Except for a group of pictures depicting camp life in the Union Army, most are genteel courting and sporting scenes: ice-skating parties, croquet games, frolicking swimmers, and bewhiskered gents roughing it in the Adirondacks. It's a pleasure to watch Homer's stiff draftsmanship grow gradually more supple, but the blinkered gaiety of these pictures does occasionally become oppressive. No wonder that, at the end of his life, the artist devoted himself solely to penitential scenes of pounding surf. Through Oct. 10. (Open Wednesdays and Fridays, 10 to 5; Thursdays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St. (744-8181)—"The Resonance of the Qin in East Asian Art" collects forty works—paintings, drawings, pottery figures, and wood-block prints—picturing the instrument known as the *qin,* a shallow box with seven silk strings, the playing of which was one of the "four accomplishments" of scholar-gentlemen of the Song dynasty (the others were calligraphy, painting, and Chinese chess). The typically spare *qin* (pronounced "chin") music is credited with a mysterious power to purify the mind. Through Dec. 12. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"In Company: Robert Creeley's Collaborations" collects evidence of the Black Mountain poet's ceaseless joint efforts: with Francesco Clemente, Jim Dine, Donald Sultan, Alex Katz, John Chamberlain, Susan Rothenberg, Joe Brainard, R. B. Kitaj, Sol LeWitt, Robert Indiana, and Georg Baselitz, to name just the artists. Through Jan. 13. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Herbert Brown—Large overpainted collages from the sixties, by an artist associated with the short-lived No!art group. The name suggests the rudimentary self-assertion of a two-year-old, and these paintings are true to that defiant, if not exactly winning, spirit. Over a surface composed of subway advertisements Brown has smeared ragged nude figures, usually women, along with an occasional phrase like "Shoot Shoot Kill Kill." De Kooning's "Woman I" was clearly a big influence on these works, but Brown lacks the great Dutchman's lubricious touch. Through Oct. 15. (Gat, 1100 Madison Ave., at 82nd St. 327-0441.)

Elie Nadelman (1882-1946) / **Martin Dieterle**—Almost fifty doll-like figurines, in plaster, porcelain, and papier-mâché, made during the last years of the Polish-born sculptor's life. With their swelling Mae West bosoms and archaic headdresses, most of these works, though hardly the artist's most memorable, have a voluptuous indecisiveness. Also on view is the life-size original casting of Nadelman's "Two Women," from which the marshmallowy sculpture in the New York State Theatre atrium was (posthumously) enlarged. / Paintings by a French art historian who is an authority on Corot. Other influences float through these breezy, disciplined landscapes and still-lifes (including Klimt and the Bay Area figurative painters), but Dieterle is at his best when he gives way to his principal passion, as in several panoramas of Parisian rooftops, painted in the master's ochres and grays. Both shows through Oct. 2. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Open Mondays.)

Tom Sachs—Don't let the Hermès-style airsickness bag by the counter fool you. This time out, Sachs eschews the colorful brand-name absurdities (such as the Chanel chainsaw or the Prada Happy Meal) of his notorious first show. The artist calls these sculptures "cultural prosthetics"; among them are a functioning foam-core toilet with an Evian tank and a full-scale replica of an airplane lavatory. The back gallery is given over to three whitewashed boom boxes, all playing CDs that the fashionable Sachs mixed himself. Through Oct. 25. (Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 752-2929.)

Ray Yoshida—Collages by an eccentric Chicago-based artist and teacher. In his latest work, Yoshida returns to an idiom he first developed in the sixties, composing with small brightly colored fragments excised from the borders of newspaper cartoons. Arranged neatly in rows, these odd snippets of imagery (a shoulder, a steering wheel, part of a desk) require—and inspire—the patience of a numismatist. Their text-balloon titles, however, evoke the bittersweet pleasures that all collectors know: "Tsk!" and "Dang!" and "Mmph" and "Aha!" A modest but entirely charming show. Through Oct. 9. (Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. 861-7338.)

"Drawn to Matisse"—An especially fine group of works on paper by Matisse, and by artists with Matissean affinities. Some of these, including David Hockney and John Graham, are more usually associated with Picasso, but it's hard to quibble with a show that includes so many outstanding drawings. One highlight is Hockney's ink portrait of an unexpectedly earnest-looking Cecil Beaton, who seems to be staring hungrily across the gallery toward a young hunk from Andy Warhol's never-published "Boy Book." Closer to Matisse's own hedonist tastes are female nudes by Le Corbusier, Milton Avery, and Richard Diebenkorn. Through Oct. 16. (Ameringer Howard, 41 E. 57th St. 935-1100.)

Short List—**debra bermingham** and **paul wonner,** DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111. Both shows through Oct. 2. . . . **herman braun-vega,** Haime, 41 E. 57th St. 888-3550. Open Mondays; through Oct. 2. . . . **grisha bruskin** and **magdalena abakanowicz,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; both shows through Oct. 5. . . . **luisa caldwell,** Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St. 879-3500. Through Oct. 16. . . . **beauford delaney** and **harold cousins,** Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082. Both shows through Oct. 30. . . . **cathy de monchaux,** Mitchell-Innes &

Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 744-7400. Through Oct. 21. . . . **HOLLY LANE,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through Oct. 16. . . . **JAMES LECHAY,** Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 307-5730. Through Oct. 13. . . . **CATHERINE LEE,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470. Through Oct. 16. . . . **BRUCE MC CALL,** James Goodman, 41 E. 57th St. 593-3737. Through Oct. 16. . . . **MARK PODWAL,** Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545. Through Sept. 25. . . . **JACQUES VILLEGLÉ,** Ubu, 16 E. 78th St. 794-4444. Through Oct. 23. . . . **HENRY WARD,** Tatistchieff, 50 W. 57th St. 664-0907. **STEVE WHEELER,** York, 21 E. 65th St. 772-9155. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through Oct. 23. . . . **JACK YOUNGERMAN,** Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 397-6780. Through Oct. 30.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

CÉLESTE BOURSIER-MOUGENOT—A fleet of blue-and-white bowls and the occasional wine glass float in five inflatable kiddie pools. The crockery is kept in motion by a pump; the acoustics of the spacious gallery enhance the accidental music. While the gallery resounds with clinking chimes, you can pull up a chair and watch a bumper-car water ballet straight out of Morandi. Clearly, the French artist cum composer is influenced by the chance operations of John Cage. Still, you sympathize with gallery staff: delightful as the experience may be, after eight hours on duty, Cage's 4' 33" of silence would come as a blessed relief. Through Oct. 16. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105.)

GILES LYON—Large paintings of swirling lines in bright, acid-flashback colors. Made up of intestinal forms and studio debris (dirt, hair clippings, and stickers from Chiquita bananas), Lyon's work is a sort of twentieth-century grab bag: Surrealist-inspired automatic line, Pollock-style numinousness, sixties Pop flipness, nineties cartoon aesthetics. Through Oct. 16. (Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.)

DAN PETERMAN—This Chicago-based artist continues to explore resource transformation (read: recycling), with mixed to disappointing results. A series of handsome works on paper look at first glance like Rorschach tests; in fact, they're the by-product of decomposing "inky cap" mushrooms. There's a whimsical aluminum fruit stand, complete with apples; the stand came into being when the top of a truck ran into a low-clearance bridge. "Perfect Pattern," an installation of textile remnants arranged on reprocessed-plastic bricks, looks like a formalist tag sale. Through Oct. 16. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

DAVID SHAPIRO—Life masks of artists and critics, cast in tofu, displayed in vats of water, in a refrigeration unit. At the opening, the artist cut and served some of the work, with a vegetable or meat curry. Shapiro has also created a video game (in collaboration with John Groh), based on a bad acid trip he endured as a teen-ager, which ended with him naked on the L.I.R.R. Psychedelia flashes by as the player negotiates the transitscape, picking up "bad trip survival rations" (i.e., packets of ketchup). Wonderfully unhinged. Through Oct. 16. (Liebman Magnan, 552 W. 24th St. 255-3225.)

"FAX-BAK"—Bank, an English artists' collective, presents the results of a public-service project: they faxed galleries back their own press releases, with comments and an overall grade (one reads, "Overly verbose; full of overblown claims and exhausting hyperbolic sales pitch"; another, "Incomplete sentence! Always read over what you've written"). They also painted some completely extraneous watercolors on top of their edited releases, none of which manage to obscure the passages of richly deserved snideness they have penned in the margin. Through Oct. 16. (Goldsworthy, 453 W. 17th St. 414-4560.)

SHORT LIST—**HANS ACCOLA,** Eller, 529 W. 20th St. 206-6411. Through Oct. 9. . . . **BILL ADAMS,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through Oct. 9. . . . **JOY EPISALLA,** Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080. Through Oct. 9. . . . **TILL FREIWALD,** Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701. Through Oct. 9. . . . **TOM GREGG,** Billis, 526 W. 26th St. 645-2621. Through Oct. 16. . . . **WILLIAM L. HAWKINS,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Oct. 9. . . . **CLAIRE JERVERT,** Martz, 529 W. 20th St. 206-3686. Through Oct. 9. . . . **SUSANNE KÜHN,** Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318. Through Oct. 9. . . . **SOL LE WITT,** Cooper, 521 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Through Nov. 16. . . . **OMAR LOPEZ-CHAHOUD,** DeChiara Stewart, 521 W. 26th St. 967-6007. Through Oct. 9. . . . **HOLLY MILLER,** Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 243-5937. Through Oct. 16. . . . **ALDO ROSSI,** Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999. Through Oct. 16. . . . **ANDREAS SLOMINSKI,** Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Through Oct. 16. . . . **JOSEPH STASHKEVETCH,** Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through Oct. 16. . . . **SU-EN WONG,** Stux, 529 W. 20th St. 352-1600. Through Oct. 16.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

KATURAH HUTCHESON—Process-minded paintings, drawings, and photographs inspired by a poet's love of cast-off things. Made from materials like composite board, pool paint, and used paper (one drawing bears the boot print of its previous owner), Hutcheson's elegantly manufactured "nature" studies suggest romantic engagement with the forgotten and rejected. Her tiny photographs—cloudy, radiant visions of mostly light and contour—were taken with her own childhood plastic Diana camera. A display of simple artistry which recalls the credo of Saint Teresa of Lisieux: little ways of kindness. Through Sept. 30. (Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219).

MARGARET KILGALLEN / LANE TWITCHELL—An installation (i.e., the walls are covered with paintings on plywood, tin, and stitched-canvas squares) by a former book conservator and avid surfer. The room teems with the evidence of both passions: random words in frontier-style typography float alongside various surfer silhouettes. Kilgallen gets her paint free, from a recycling center where left-over colors are mixed experimentally (apparently into pale shades of butterscotch, pistachio, strawberry, and root beer). The

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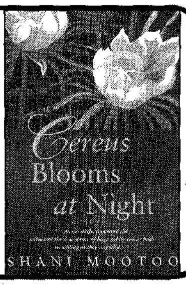

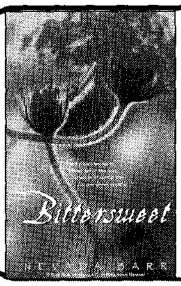

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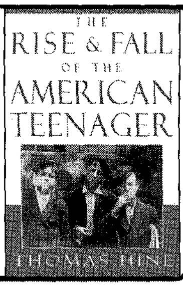

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tramp-art images, too, look salvaged from a sort of myth-redemption center: a locust tree, a pair of fistfighting mamas, surfer women in turn-of-the-century swimwear. The tumult of this scruffy, nostalgic stuff manages to feel both random and rhythmic. / Strips of colored tissue paper, cut into elaborate designs. Decorative, but with an ironic, autobiographical bite. Both shows through Oct. 9. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

Short List—**Karen Arm** and **Brett Reichman**, P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642. Both shows through Oct. 9. . . . **Francesco Clemente**, Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through Nov. 6. . . . **Ceal Floyer**, Kaplan, 48 Greene St. 226-6131. Through Oct. 9. . . . **Shirazeh Houshiary**, Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753. Through Oct. 30. . . . **Olivier Mosset**, Brownstone, 39 Wooster St. 334-3455. Through Oct. 23. . . . **Tom Nakashima**, Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St. 431-4224. Through Oct. 9. . . . **Pepón Osorio**, Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through Oct. 9. . . . **Alison Saar**, Kind, 136 Greene St. 925-1200. Through Oct. 30. . . . **Yutaka Sone**, Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074. Through Oct. 9. . . . **Not Vital**, Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685. Through Oct. 2.

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz / Nick Kline—Martin and Muñoz present a hilarious parody of a trade-fair installation featuring what would be, certainly, Disney's raciest product line. A boutique display holds Disney Lites cigarettes, flasks of Disney vodka, King Donald cigars, a condom line called Disdoms (“trusted for over 80 years”) and Minniepax tampons—in lite, regular, super, and super plus. Kline, holding to the conventioneering theme, displays deadpan C-prints of trade-show booths as formal still-lifes. One, presumably taken at the Meat and Dairy Convention, includes the image of a life-size plastic hog among booths, desks, and rest-room signs. Through Oct. 18. (Momenta Art, 72 Berry St. 718-218-8058. Open Fridays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

Nicky Nodjoumi—Paintings of drab-suited bureaucrats disporting in rocky, desertlike landscapes. Working from newspaper photographs, this Iranian artist sets his characters in attitudes of energetic aimlessness (running nowhere or jousting on stilts) or nightmarish calm: one man with the hunched shoulders of Dick Nixon holds a sign emblazoned with a backward “1999.” Another, his arm tucked into his pants pocket, studies a fish offered by yet one more inscrutable suit. Through Oct 11. (Pierogi 2000, 177 N. 9th St. 718-599-2144. Open Fridays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

Nick Woods—A tack-smart installation that turns a modest-sized gallery into a set for a life-size cartoon. By suspending an eight-foot plaster cumulonimbus cloud (salient characteristics: anvil shape and great height) near the gallery entrance, Wood creates a spatial conundrum: “How will the trapped cloud make it out the door to the street?” A painting of a sky diver and an elegant installation sketch on two Plexiglas panels rounds out this clever exhibition. Through Oct. 3. (Bingo Hall, 212 Berry St. 718-599-0844. Open Saturdays and Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—A seven-day auction of baseball memorabilia from the massive collection of Barry Halper. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000. Sept. 23-29.)

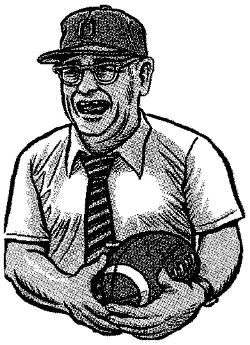
Christie's East—Sept. 22: European decorative art. . . . ¶ Sept. 23: Jewelry. . . . ¶ Sept. 28: Americana. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400.)

Chelsea Antiquarian Book Fair—A hundred international exhibitors offering all manner of printed rarities. (Chelsea Pavilion, 192 W. 18th St. Sept. 23-26. For information, call 777-5218.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Rah!

“INSTEAD of a know-nothing Neanderthal, I found a Renaissance man,” Richard Nixon said in his 1987 eulogy of Woody Hayes, the blustery Ohio State football coach. Nixon shouldn't have been surprised. In college football, the real star power resides on the sidelines, with coaches who are as much revered as they are feared and misunderstood. For all the brute intensity of the game, it's one that's still played, more or less, by students, and coached, more or less, by professors.


Woody Hayes

DOUG ALLEN

Nixon's eulogy appears in **I Remember Woody** (Masters Press), by Steve Greenberg and Dale Ratermann, a compendium of stories about the feisty Buckeye coach who fortified his players with quotes from Emerson and Chairman Mao, braved the Columbus winters in shirtsleeves, became the only coach to take his team to four straight Rose Bowls, and was fired in 1978 after slugging a Clemson guard in a nationally televised Gator Bowl. Hayes had many notable protégés, including Michigan legend Bo Schembechler and Yale's Carm Cozza, the beloved longtime coach whom Don Kagan, a former dean of the college, called “the best teacher at Yale.” **True Blue** (Yale), Cozza's just published autobiography, includes a spirited recollection of the Bulldogs' 29–29 “loss” to Harvard in 1968.

Since 1966, Penn State's Joe Paterno has brought two national championships to the former “cow college.” In **No Ordinary Joe** (Rutledge Hill), Michael O'Brien reveals how Paterno lobbied to make State a more challenging and diverse place while striving to achieve, as he put it, “first-class football played by students who put first-class lives first.” His idea would have been endorsed by Knute Rockne, who, Ray Robinson argues in **Rockne of Notre Dame** (Oxford), was the greatest coach of all. The fedora-wearing Norwegian popularized the forward pass, asked his team to “win one for the Gipper,” and, before perishing in a plane crash in 1931, put the Fighting Irish brand of football on the map. Rockne was coaching's Platonic ideal: a genuine scholar who stirred up his players by roaring, “Now get out there and crucify 'em!”

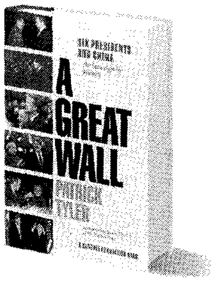
Books.

[AT BARNES & NOBLE]

Pages from History

A GREAT WALL

by Patrick Tyler



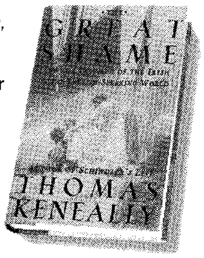
In a masterful investigative history, the former Beijing bureau chief of *The New York Times* illuminates the decades-long struggle between two of the world's most powerful nations. Interviews with American presidents, Chinese officials and key leaders intersect with discussions of the Cultural Revolution, Tiananmen Square and the critical issues that inform this geopolitical relationship. (PublicAffairs)

Pub. Price: $27.50 Discount **20%**

Our Price: $22.00

THE GREAT SHAME

by Thomas Keneally



The author of *Schindler's List* presents new, thoroughly documented insights into the depletion of the Irish population during the nineteenth century. Focusing on three major causes—the potato famine, emigration and the forced transportation of criminals to Australia—Keneally brilliantly recreates this chapter of the Irish experience.
(Nan A. Talese)

Pub. Price: $35.00 Discount **20%**

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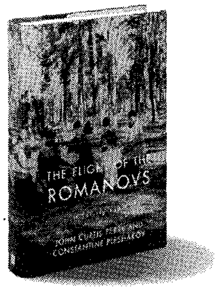
THE FLIGHT OF THE ROMANOVS

by John Curtis Perry
& Constantine Pleshakov



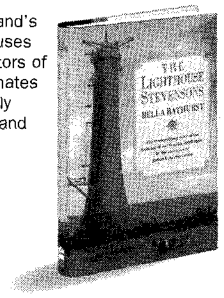
Tufts historian Perry and Russian scholar Pleshakov offer a new perspective on Russia's last imperial dynasty. The research team explores the decline and ultimate downfall of the Romanovs' privileged lives, beginning with Tsar Alexander III's youth and ending with the death of his daughter, the Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna, in 1960.
(Basic Books)

Pub. Price: $30.00 Discount **20%**

Our Price: $24.00

THE LIGHTHOUSE STEVENSONS

by Bella Bathurst



Some of the remotest locations of Scotland's rocky coast are marked by grand lighthouses conceived and constructed by the ancestors of Robert Lewis Stevenson. Bathurst illuminates how four generations of the writer's family were instrumental in designing, building and operating some of the North Sea's most impressive historic architecture.
(HarperCollins)

Pub. Price: $24.00 Discount **20%**

Our Price: $19.20

THE WOMEN WHO WROTE THE WAR

by Nancy Caldwell Sorel

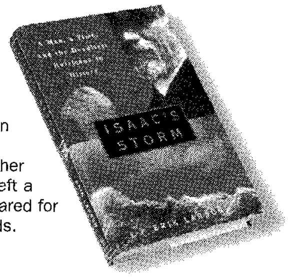
Through combat zone narratives and vivid excerpts of wartime reportage, Nancy Sorel profiles Margaret Bourke-White, Martha Gellhorn, Janet Flanner, and other notable World War II female journalists. These trailblazers have not only come to represent an inextricable part of the women's rights struggle, they have also earned their place in history.
(Arcade)

Pub. Price: $27.95 Discount **20%**

Our Price: $22.36

ISAAC'S STORM

by Erik Larson



On September 8, 1900, the people of Galveston, Texas, stood at the ocean's edge, awed by massive waves and an eerily pink sky, oblivious to the devastation about to come. Historian Erik Larson explores how arrogance and miscalculation, embodied by U.S. Weather Bureau meteorologist Isaac Cline, left a city's population completely unprepared for a hurricane that would kill thousands.
(Crown Publishing)

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Caramoor Fall Antiques Show—Forty dealers gather at Caramoor's colonnaded Venetian Theatre. (Katonah, N.Y. Sept. 25-26, with a benefit preview on Sept. 24. . . . **note:** "Antiques Road Show" host Chris Jussel will give a lecture during a reception on the evening of Sept. 25. For information, call 914-232-1253.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

"A Century of Times Square"—Photographs from the hundred-year-old archives of the New York *Times*. Through Oct. 23. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

"Eyewitness 1999"—The best press photographs of 1998, selected by the World Press Photo Foundation. Through Oct. 10. (North Bridge, World Financial Center, Battery Park City. Open daily, twenty-four hours.)

"Female"—Another gender-based group show curated by Vince Aletti. Among the dozens of artists on view are Marianne Courville, Bruce Cratsley, John Dugdale, Mitch Epstein, Emmet Gowin, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Vik Muniz, and Rosalind Solomon. Through Oct. 10. (Wessel and O'Connor, 242 W. 26th St. 242-8811. Open Sundays.)

International Center of Photography—"Sea Change: The Seascape in Contemporary Photography." Through Oct. 10. . . . ¶ "Myths, Dreams, and Realities in Contemporary Argentine Photography." Through Oct. 10. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"Bill Brandt: A Retrospective." Through Oct. 31. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

Season Openers—**jennifer bolande,** Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 19th St. 367-7474. Through Oct. 16. . . . **alvin booth** and **ferenc berko,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Both shows through Oct. 9. . . . **elinor carucci,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Oct. 9. . . . **mitch epstein,** Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 929-2262. Through Oct. 16. . . . **adam fuss,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through Oct. 16. . . . **samuel gottscho,** Alan Klotz/Photocollect, 22 E. 72nd St. 327-2211. Closed Tuesdays; through Oct. 23. . . . **marcus leatherdale,** Bridgewater/Lustberg & Blumenfeld, 560 Broadway. 941-6355. Through Oct. 16. . . . **david malin,** Schickler, 560 Broadway. 431-6363. Opens Sept. 23. . . . **sally mann,** Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Opens Sept. 23. . . . **constantine manos,** Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; Through Oct. 23. . . . **maria martinez-cañas,** Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Through Oct. 9. . . . **richard misrach,** Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 989-7600. Through Oct. 23. . . . **yasumasa morimura,** Luhring Augustine, 531 W. 24th St. 206-9100. Through Oct. 16. . . . **daido moriyama** and **reagan louie,** Laurence Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930. Both shows through Oct. 30. . . . **irving penn,** Pace Wildenstein (through Sept. 25) and Pace-MacGill (through Oct. 23), both at 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. . . . **alison rossiter,** Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Through Oct. 16. . . . **collier schorr,** 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121. Through Oct. 30. . . . **david seidner,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223. Through Oct. 9. . . . **jack spencer,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through Oct. 23. . . . **andré steiner,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through Oct. 23. . . . **dan winters,** SABA, 116 E. 16th St. 477-7722. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; Through Oct. 22.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the American Museum of Natural History.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—First performances of the season, which begins on a village square in Sicily and continues through the collapse of Valhalla on May 6. A double bill of **cavalleria rusticana,** with Dolora Zajick, José Cura (in his house début), and Nikolai Putilin, and **pagliacci,** with Veronica Villarroel, Plácido Domingo, Juan Pons, and Dwayne Croft. Carlo Rizzi conducts both. (Sept. 27 at 6:30.) . . . **moses und aron,** by Schoenberg, with Philip Langridge and John Tomlinson; conducted by James Levine. (Sept. 28 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

New York City Opera—Sept. 22 at 7:30 and Sept. 25 at 8: "The Magic Flute," performed in English. . . . ¶ Sept. 23 at 7:30 and Sept. 25 at 1:30: Rossini's "Il Viaggio a Reims.". . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 8: "Madama Butterfly.". . . ¶ Sept. 26 at 1:30: Handel's "Ariodante." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Amato Opera Company—Presenting "La Traviata." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Sept. 25 at 7:30 and Sept. 26 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Kurt Masur conducts the opening concerts of the orchestra's hundred and fifty-eighth season. Sept. 23 at 8: Dvořák's Cello Concerto (featuring Mstislav Rostropovich) and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5. . . . ¶ Sept. 24 at 2 and Sept. 28 at 7:30: Stravinsky's "Pulcinella" Suite and his Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra (with Michel Beroff as soloist), in addition to Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030.)

New York Pops—The singer and pianist Michael Feinstein, mezzo-soprano Lillias White, jazz vocalist Carol Sloane, and trumpeter Byron Stripling join the orchestra, conducted by Skitch Henderson, for a centennial tribute to Hoagy Carmichael. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. Sept. 22 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

St. Francis Singers and ARTEK—Gwendolyn Toth leads the vocalists and the period-instrument players in a forty-minute lunchtime concert of Vivaldi's familiar "Gloria." (St. Francis of Assisi Church, 135 W. 31st St. Sept. 23 at 1:15. No tickets necessary.)

Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard conducts two separate programs at Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church. Sept. 23 at 2 and 7: Three works by Mozart, each in the key of C Major: his Symphony No. 36 (the "Linz"), Andante for Flute (featuring Reva Youngstein), and Piano Concerto No. 25 (K. 503, with Seymour Lipkin as soloist). . . . ¶ Sept. 27 at 2 and 7 and Sept. 28 at 8: Gluck's Symphony in G Major, Strauss's Oboe Concerto (with Gerard Reuter), Paul Ben-Haim's "Three Songs Without Words," and David Popper's "Im Walde" (featuring cellist Wendy Warner). (152 W. 66th St. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

All-Jobim—The Brazilian composer Antonio Carlos Jobim had two guitar-playing uncles: one made a specialty of Bach and the nineteenth-century classical-guitar masters, while the other was drawn to samba and other popular styles. The nephew grew up to be a synthesis of these two formative influences, producing elegantly detailed compositions that straddle the worlds of the classical and the popular, including, in the latter category, the seminal works of the bossa-nova school of the nineteen-fifties. This all-Jobim tribute includes performances by both classical artists, such as flutist Paula Robison, and Brazilian pop stars, including Simone, João Bosco, Cesar Camargo Mariano, and Romero Lubambo. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 24 at 8.)

Orpheus Chamber Orchestra—The conductorless ensemble performs Gluck's "Orfeo ed Euridice" Overture, Strauss's "Metamorphosen," and Beethoven's Symphony No. 3. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 25 at 8.)

Copenhagen Royal Chapel Choir—The government of Denmark is mounting an assault on New York this fall with The Danish Wave, a wildly varied cultural festival that comprises events relating to classical and popular music, theatre, film, literature, and the visual arts. In the first of the classical concerts, Ebbe Munk leads the Copenhagen Royal Chapel Choir, a world-famous boys' choir, in works by, among others, Britten, Byrd, Bruckner, and the Danish composers Palle Mikkelborg, Carl Nielsen, and Niels Gade. (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 664-9360. Sept. 28 at 7:30.)

RECITALS

Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio—Violinist Leila Josefowicz, violist Michael Tree, and pianist Joan Tower assist the piano trio (in various combinations) in a recital that comprises Haydn's Piano Trio in A Major (Hob. XV:18), Ms. Tower's "Très Lent" (for cello and piano), Moritz Moszkowski's Suite in G Minor (Op. 71, for two violins and piano), and Dvořák's A-Major Piano Quintet (Op. 81). (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Sept. 22 at 8.)

Abbey Simon—The pianist offers an all-Chopin recital that includes the B-Minor Sonata and the Twelve Études (Op. 10). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 22 at 8.)

Tribute to Robert Casadesus—One of the notable piano virtuosos of his time, Robert Casadesus (1899-1972) was a leaf on an exceptionally musical family tree: his uncles were the conductor Francis (a.k.a. François) Louis Casadesus (who founded the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau, which Robert would eventually oversee), violist and viola d'amore player Henri Casadesus (composer of the "Adelaide" Concerto, once fraudulently purveyed,

Guitarist Sharon Isbin, in recital at the Juilliard Theatre.

N. ASCENCIOS

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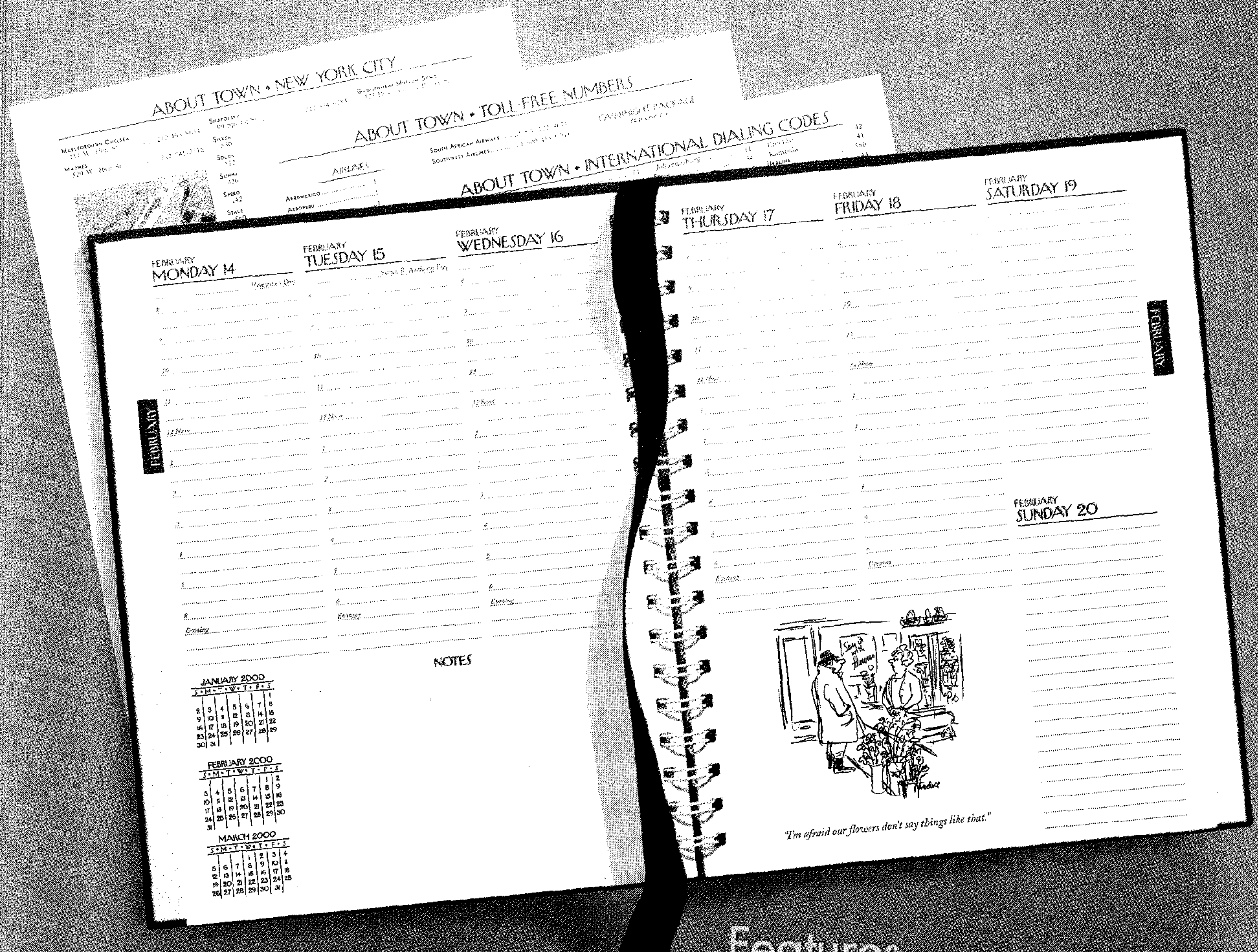
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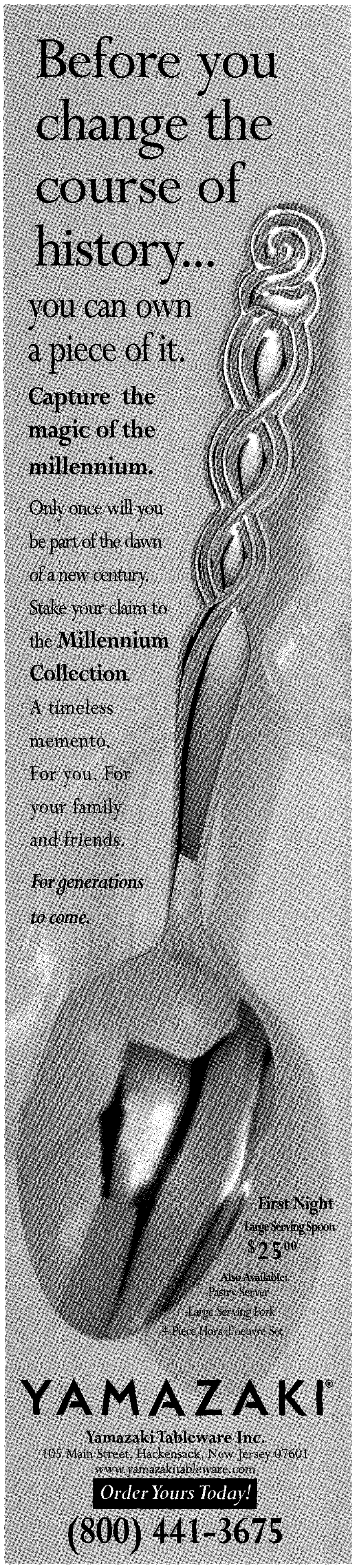
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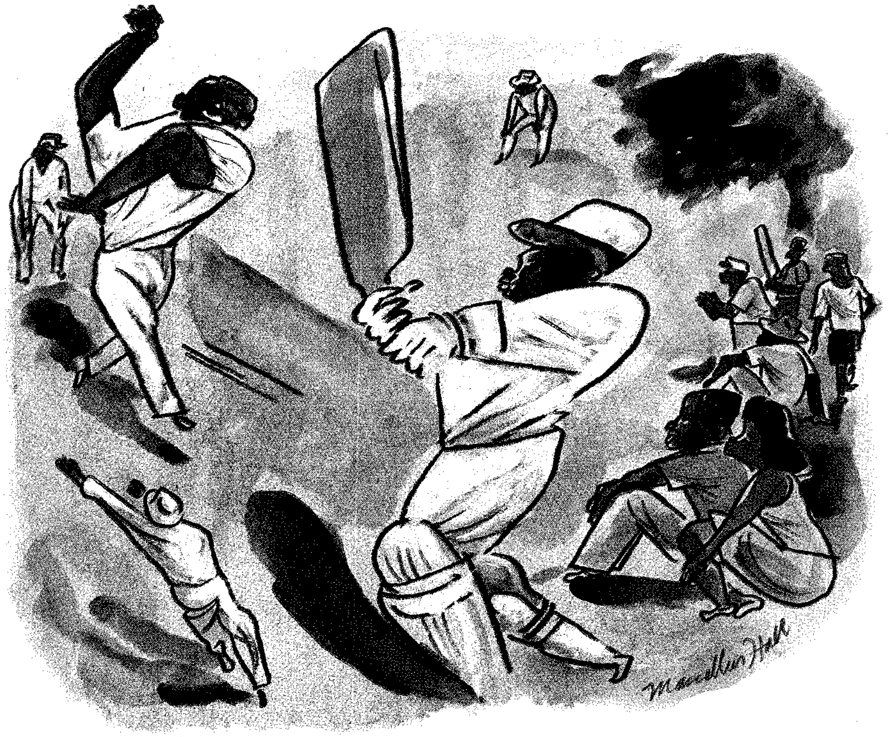
and briefly accepted, as a piece by Mozart), violinist Marius Casadesus (an early champion of historical instruments), and cellist Marcel Louis Lucien—and Robert's aunt Rose was a highly regarded pianist. He performed often with his wife, Gaby (who will attend this concert), and his son, Jean, both of whom were notable pianists, and he was known to make music with his nephew Jean-Claude Casadesus, a well-known conductor. Famous for his sense of musical balance and his fine gradations of pianistic touch, Robert was also an active composer, leaving a catalogue that included seven symphonies and several concertos. To note the centennial of his birth, pianists Grant Johannesen, John Owings, and Philippe Bianconi, joined by flutist Mimi Stillman and violinist Fritz Gearhart, perform a recital that includes his Piano Sonata No. 4, his Flute Sonata, and several of his shorter piano works, in addition to solo-piano pieces by Schumann and Ravel with which he was associated. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 22 at 8.)

Kathleen Supové—This avant-garde pianist performs Frederic Rzewski's "Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues," John Adams's "Phrygian Gates," and pieces by Randall Woolf, Aaron Jay Kernis, and Alvin Curran, with unpredictable theatrical bits inserted along the way. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Church St. and Broadway. 226-0051. Sept. 22 at 8.)

Michael Lofton and Nori NkeAka—The baritone and the bass, assisted by pianist Jeffrey Middleton, include in their recital rarely heard duets for low voices by Agostino Steffani and Hanns Eisler. (Church of St. Matthew and St. Timothy, 26 W. 84th St. Sept. 23 at 7:30. Tickets at the door.)

Bargemusic—Presenting the Whitman String Quartet, assisted by double-bassist Timothy Cobb, in performances of Haydn's Quartet in F Minor (Op. 20, No. 5), Miguel Kertsman's "Rosenfeld" Quartet, and Brahms's Quartet in C Minor (Op. 51, No. 1). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. Sept. 23 at 7:30 and Sept. 26 at 2.)



Leather on willow: Cricket in Canarsie Park (see Above and Beyond).

Music by Philip Glass—Two separate events. Sept. 24 at 7: A screening of the film "Powaqqatsi," with Glass's soundtrack score.... ¶ Sept. 27 at 7: Several colleagues join Mr. Glass to play his music for Genet's play "The Screens," among other works. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949.)

Autumnal Brahms—Violinist Ariel Shamai, violist Rebecca Young, cellist Maria Kitsopoulos, and pianist Ilan Rechtman perform Brahms's C-Minor Piano Quartet, occasionally called the "Werther" Quartet because the composer suggested that his publisher print a picture of Goethe's despondent antihero on the cover of the score of this tortured work. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Sept. 26 at noon.)

Sharon Isbin—In the opening concert of Juilliard's Daniel Saidenberg Faculty Recital Series (one of the best musical bargains in town), the noted guitarist offers a wide-ranging program of works that draw their inspiration from folk sources, including John Duarte's "Appalachian Dreams," Ms. Isbin's own arrangements of four Israeli songs by Naomi Shemer, and a transcription of Bartók's "Rumanian Dances." Flutist Carol Wincenc and guitarist Antigoni Goni assist. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Sept. 27 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

Parnassus—The ensemble opens its season with an imaginative program of twentieth-century works that reveal a jazz or cabaret sensibility, including accordionist William Schimmel's "Rhapsody on Tenth Avenue/Slaughter in Blue," Ervín Schulhoff's "Hot Sonata" (for saxophone and piano), and cabaret songs by Poulenc, Léon Raiter, Satie, and Joseph Kosma, featuring mezzo-soprano Joyce Castle. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave, near Spring St. Sept. 27 at 8. For information about tickets, call 647-0202.)

ALSO OF INTEREST

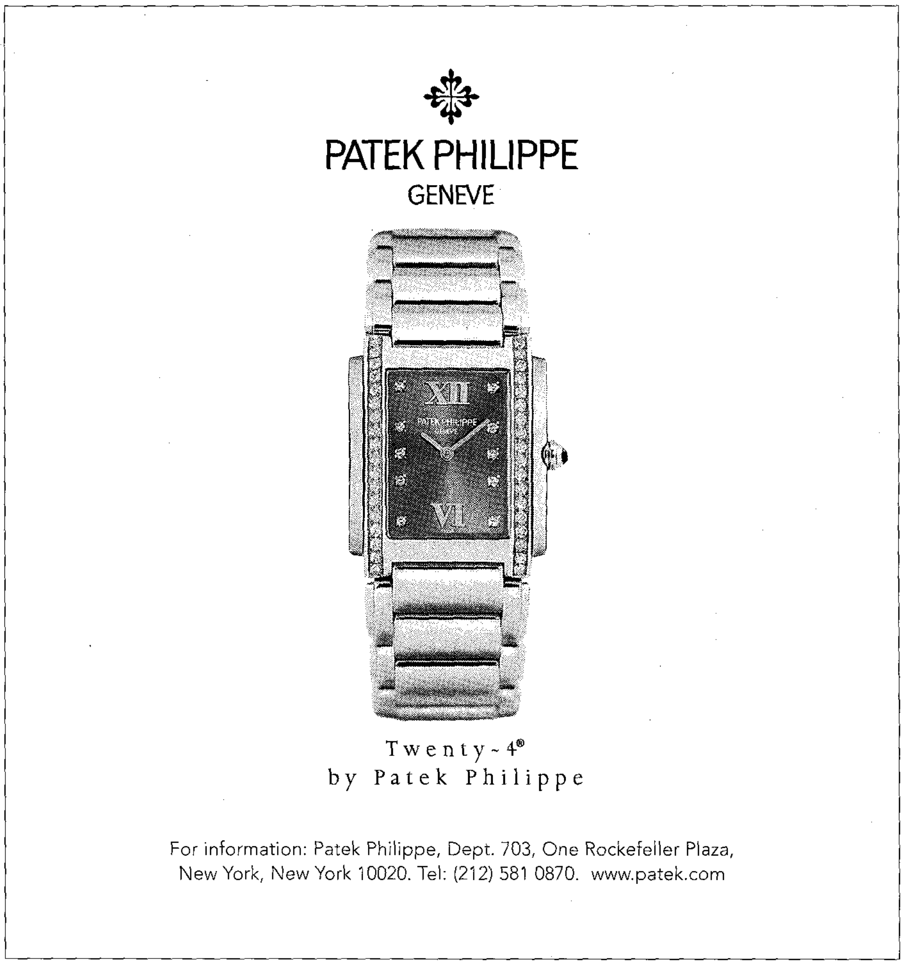
CONCERTANTE CHAMBER PLAYERS: Jon Manasse is featured in clarinet quintets by Brahms and Mozart. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Sept. 22 at 8.) . . . **IAN LAWRENCE PARKER AND CHUAN QIN:** A recital by the co-winners of Juilliard's 1999 Gina Bachauer Competition. (Paul Hall, Juilliard School, 60 Lincoln Center Plaza. Sept. 22 at 9. No tickets necessary.) . . . **JUILLIARD SYMPHONY:** Joel Smirnoff leads Sibelius's "Tapiola," Mahler's "Rückert-lieder" (with mezzo-soprano Makiko Narumi), and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Sept. 24 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.) . . . **MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC SYMPHONY:** Zdenek Macal conducts Richard Danielpour's "Toward the Splendid City," Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto (with Ann-Estelle Medouze), and Brahms's Symphony No. 1. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Sept. 24 at 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . **DUO CAVATINA:** A geographically diverse program of music for flute and guitar, by Ravi Shankar, the Brazilian Pixinguinha, and many other composers. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. Sept. 26 at 4. Tickets at the door.) . . . **MARCUS DE LOACH:** The baritone, with pianist Thomas Bagwell, performs songs by Beethoven, Chausson, and others. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 734-2130. Sept. 26 at 3.) . . . **AMIR TEBENIKHIN:** The winner of the 1999 Vianna da Motta piano competition performs works by Bach, Brahms, Debussy, and Prokofiev. (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. Sept. 26 at 8:30.). . . **PROMETHEUS CHAMBER PLAYERS:** Bach's "Brandenburg" Concerto No. 2, Kodály's Duo for Violin and Cello, and Tchaikovsky's "Souvenir de Florence." (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Sept. 28 at 2.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

OVER AND OVER—Thirteen men neatly outfitted in white shirts and pants lolling for hours around a set of wooden stumps while they take turns swatting at a small ball is still an odd sight in New York City, but cricket matches have actually been played here since 1838. These days, with the city's growing West Indian population, the game is more popular than ever; the United States of America Cricket Association lists ninety-six teams in the city. On Sept. 25 at 11 A.M., the finalists of the annual Guinness/Red Stripe Cricket Tournament, which features local athletes playing under the banner of their ancestral or native countries, take to the pitch at Seaview Avenue and 88th Street, in Canarsie Park, Brooklyn. Don't worry about the competition's dragging on too long. The sides play a "limited over" game, which, according to Selwyn Caesar, secretary of the U.S.A.C.A., means that "the match must be finished in one day." For more information, call 273-2845.

READINGS—Sept. 22 at 6: By Jonathan Galassi, from his translation of Eugenio Montale's poems. With Elsie Cardia reading Montale in Italian. . . . **NOTE:** Preceding the reading, at 5, there will be a tasting of food and wine associated with Montale's poetry. (Cinque Terre, 22 E. 38th St. For reservations, which are required, call 614-9683.) . . . ¶ Sept. 27 at 7:30: By poets Daniel Halpern and Prageeta Sharma. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS—Sept. 22 at 6: Bill Sims, Karen Wilson, and Cicily Wilson, all part of the family that's chronicled in Jennifer Fox's ten-part television show "An American Love Story," join Fox and PBS vice-president Ward B. Chamberlin, Jr., for a panel discussion about race, family, and documentary filmmaking. (Museum of Television & Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. 621-6600.) . . . ¶ Sept. 22 at 6: Tony Hiss, author of "The View from Alger's Window: A Son's Memoir," discusses his father, Alger Hiss. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. For information about tickets, call 930-0571.) . . . ¶ Sept. 23 at 6:30: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission member Jan Hird Pokorny moderates a panel discussion about historic preservation with Jan Kasl, an architect and the mayor of Prague, and Laurie Beckelman, a vice-president of the World Monument Fund. (National Academy of Design School of Fine Arts, 5 E. 89th St. For reservations, which are required, call 369-4880.)



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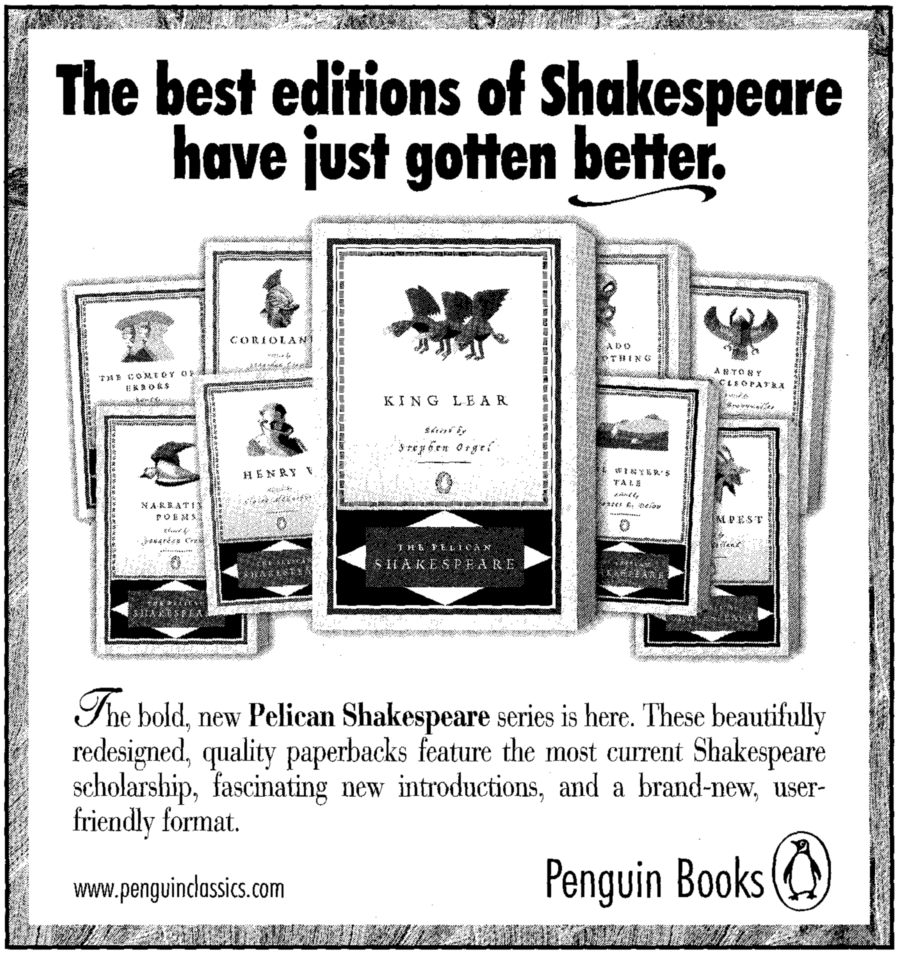

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THE MOVIES

OPENING

Bandits—Katja von Garnier's story of four female prisoners who form a rock band, escape from prison, and find themselves chased by the police and fans. In German. Opening Sept. 24. (Angelika Film Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, and 62nd & Broadway.)

Dog Park—A romantic comedy about a group of young couples, ex-couples, and their dogs. Written and directed by Bruce McCulloch. Opening Sept. 24.

Double Jeopardy—Bruce Beresford's thriller about a woman (Ashley Judd), convicted of murdering her husband, who discovers he is still alive. With Tommy Lee Jones. Opening Sept. 24.

Going Nomad—The story of a young Manhattanite who works at a minimum-wage job all day and drives around New York all night in a nineteen-seventies gas guzzler. Written and directed by Art Jones. Opening Sept. 24. (Art Greenwich Twin.)

Guinevere—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Sept. 24. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

Jakob the Liar—Despair turns to hope when residents in a Polish Jewish ghetto learn of Allied victories over the Nazis. With Robin Williams; directed by Peter Kassovitz. Opening Sept. 24.

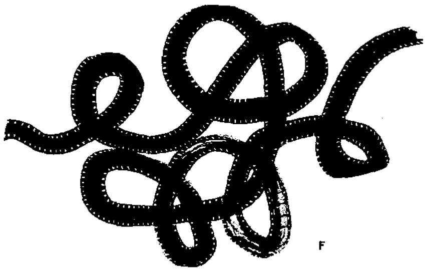
Mumford—A comedy about a psychologist and his patients. Written and directed by Lawrence Kasdan. Opening Sept. 24.

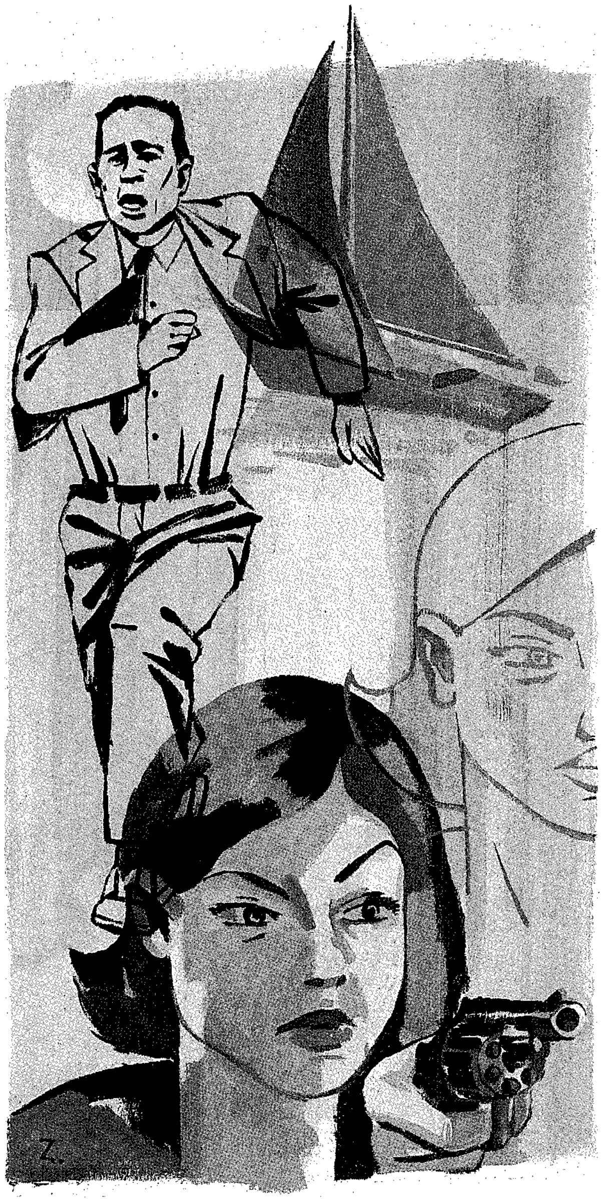
FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

American Beauty—This amazing and impassioned fantasia about American loneliness begins as satire and ends with a vision of the sublime. The defeated suburban patriarch Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey), condemned by his withdrawn daughter (Thora Birch) and his hyper-organized wife (Annette Bening), drops out of his job and misbehaves badly. After Lester's marriage gets blown apart by squalls of comic contempt, the movie, which was written by Alan Ball and directed by the British theatre maestro Sam Mendes (it's his first film), opens up and takes in Lester's suburban territory—the dissatisfactions of the business-mad nineties, in which the gospel of selfishness leaves people clenched and isolated. The bitter satirical riffs slowly give way to a mystical appreciation of the vagrant beauty trapped beneath the surface of life. The hard-edged, almost hyperreal cinematography, by Conrad L. Hall, and the editing, by Tariq Anwar and Chris Greenbury, shift back and forth between dream and actuality with mesmerizing beauty. With Mena Suvari as a teen vamp who is terrified of being ordinary, and Wes Bentley as a young drug dealer who uses his video camera to discover the hidden connections among things.—*David Denby* (9/20/99) (Beekman, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

Best Laid Plans—Mike Barker's movie is about a dirty little crime in an unnoticed town. One night, Nick (Alessandro Nivola) gets a call for help from his buddy Bryce (Josh Brolin); Bryce just met a girl called Lissa (Reese Witherspoon) in a bar and took her home. Now she is crying rape. Given the noirish air of sleaze and disloyalty that prevails, you would expect Bryce's plight to grow deeper and more tangled as the story proceeds; instead, everything gradually dwindles into mishap and minor acts of greed. Barker and his screenwriter, Ted Griffin, have taken pains to make their twists as tight as possible, and there is a true stab of comic surprise in some of the flashback scenes; yet the final impression is one of undernourishment. There's a lack of confidence in the way that plain patches are jazzed up with camera tilts and slurs of slow motion, and you end up feeling that the cast simply isn't old enough or scarred enough for these shenanigans; try as she might, Witherspoon is much too perky and affable a presence for this world of sluttish schemes. On the plus side, it's always a pleasure to meet a villain so skilled in his cupidity that he quotes Adam Smith.—*Anthony Lane* (First & 62nd Cinemas and Union Square.)





Tommy Lee Jones and Ashley Judd in "Double Jeopardy."

B. Monkey—This slick production tries to meld action caper and torrid romance but ends up diluting both. The title character (Asia Argento), so nicknamed for her agility in getting in and out of tight spots, is a cool jewel thief looking to quit the life and become just plain Beatrice. She starts an unlikely affair with Alan (Jared Harris), an altruistic schoolteacher and part-time jazz d.j.—he's kind of a cross between David Hyde Pierce and Sting. They get together in London, Paris, and the dramatic countryside of northwest England, as the director, Michael Radford ("Il Postino"), indulges in not one but two bathtub scenes along the way. The path toward domestic bliss, though, is predictably interrupted by B.'s hunger for the old action, and the plot's progression is bumpy and unimaginative. Featuring Rupert Everett as an elegant, self-destructive drug dealer to the stars.—*Ken Marks* (Angelika Film Center and Gotham Cinema.)

Brief Encounter (1946)—David Lean directed this romantic expansion of Noël Coward's one-act play "Still Life"—an evocation of the emotions that lie dormant in respectable, middle-class existence. Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard play the pair who fall passionately in love but agree not to see each other again and return to their responsibilities. A celebrated, craftsmanlike tearjerker, and incredibly neat. There's not a breath of air in it.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 23 and Sept. 27.)

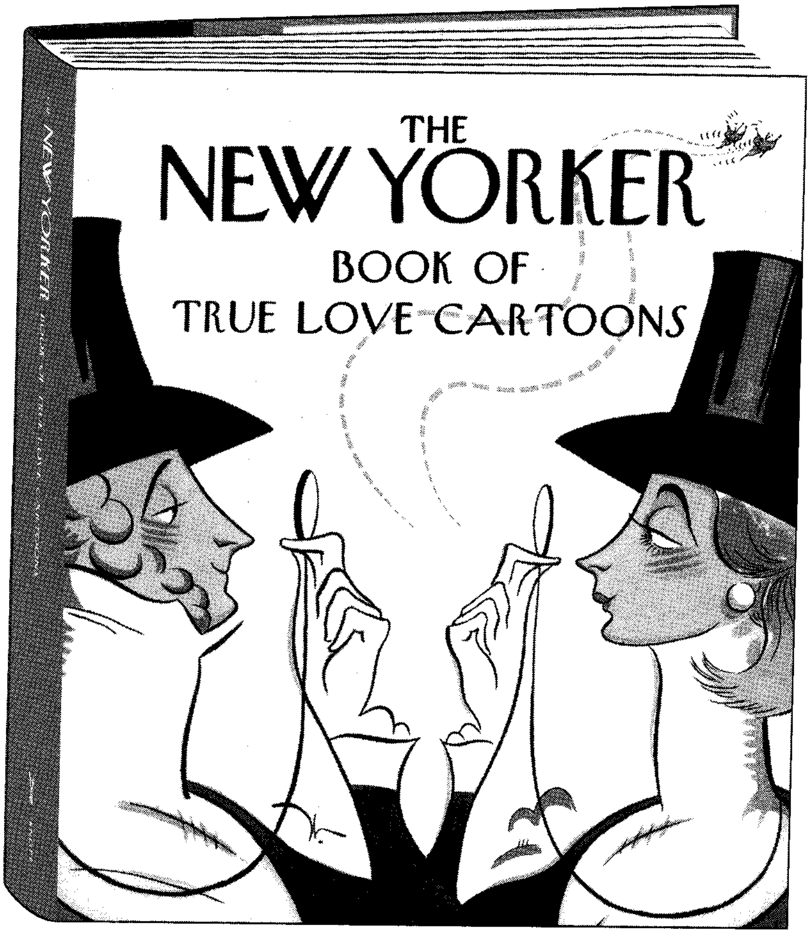
Cavalcade (1933)—An orgy of British self-congratulation in the restrained, clipped style of Noël Coward, with the added know-how of an American producer (Winfield Sheehan) and a Hollywood director (Frank Lloyd). Americans doted on this gilded tearjerker that begins with Clive Brook and his wife, Diana Wynyard, toasting the advent of the twentieth century, and follows the fortunes of their son (Frank Lawton) and their servants (Herbert Mundin and Una O'Connor) up to the film's present day. The self-conscious good taste of it all creaks, but Coward knows plenty of tricks, and the performers get the most out of his lines.—*P.K.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Sept. 25. . . . ¶ Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 26.)

Earth—India's tumultuous partition, in 1947, is recalled by a Parsi woman who was eight at the time and living in Lahore. The story centers on the girl's excursions about the city with her nanny, a beautiful young Hindu woman (Nandita Das) with a diverse group of friends which includes Sikhs and Muslims; they make where they can an idyll of their unprivileged lives. History intrudes on them, as history will, but in this sumptuous, disturbing film, director Deepa Mehta handles her material convincingly, and the cast is so likable that they wear the Larger Themes like beautiful garments. "Earth" has an urgency and a narrative economy like "Casablanca" 's; A. R. Rahman's hypnotic score and Giles Nuttgens's passionate cinematography contribute significantly to this effect.—*Jeff Gustavson* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

For Love of the Game—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Criterion Center, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

In Which We Serve (1942)—During the Second World War, Noël Coward and David Lean co-directed this skillful, discreetly realistic film about the courage and sacrifice of the British Navy, specifically the men on a de-

What's funny about true love?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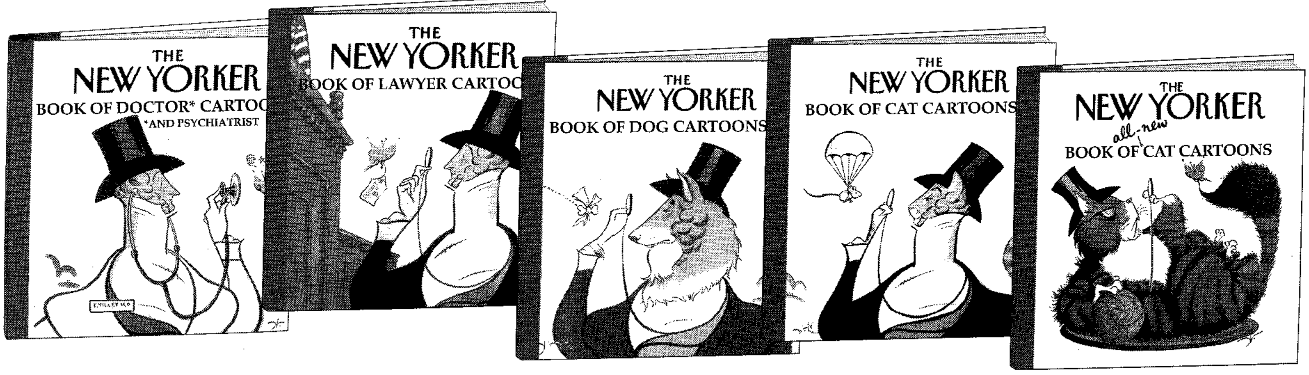
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stroyer. Coward himself plays the ship's commander; he also wrote and scored the movie and produced it. Coward's ability to package emotions and to break the audience's heart without relaxing his upper lip is more perplexing here than elsewhere.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 24 and Sept. 28.)

Kiki's Delivery Service (1989)—How do you say "*gemütlich*" in Japanese? This animated feature was a huge hit for Hayao Miyazaki, but it isn't nearly as original as his previous film, "My Neighbor Totoro": it tells the quaint, fantastical story of Kiki, a thirteen-year-old witch-in-training who goes to a Germanic seaside city with her black cat, Jiji, and puts out a shingle as a flying delivery girl. Along the way, she wins (and rescues) her first beau, an overenthusiastic aeronautics freak, and overcomes a case of "witch's block" with the help of a female artist friend who has experienced painter's block. Too many of the human figures (and the lessons they impart) are disappointingly banal, but Miyazaki's eye for land, city, sea, and air transcends kitsch. So does his visual sense of humor: there's some precious broomstick slapstick, and ace sidekick riffs from the randy, saturnine Jiji—particularly when he poses as a stuffed toy. In the version released in the United States, Kirsten Dunst and Phil Hartman do peerless voice work as Kiki and Jiji.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; Sept. 26.)

Lucie Aubrac—In 1943, a real-life French Resistance fighter who operated under the name Lucie Aubrac organized the rescue of her husband, Raymond, who had fallen into the clutches of the gestapo chief of Lyon, Klaus Barbie. The risk-taking Raymond Samuel (Daniel Auteuil) and Lucie Bernard (Carole Bouquet) are a very bourgeois couple, which is a fine and touching irony. Unfortunately, Claude Berri, who wrote and directed, doesn't see the humor in the story; he turns the material into a sanctification of marriage. After Lucie springs her husband, he puts his wedding ring back on so they can make love. Auteuil, a good actor, is so ennobled by Bouquet's seriousness that he can hardly speak. Enjoy this dream of the Resistance for the severely handsome color, the old cars, the noble gestures. In French.—*D.D.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Outside Providence—This comedy—based on Peter Farrelly's semiautobiographical novel and written by Farrelly, his brother Bobby, and director Michael Corrente ("American Buffalo," "Federal Hill")—embraces all the clichés that "Rushmore" so niftily exploded. The sweet but troubled, wrong-side-of-the-tracks Tim Dunphy (Shawn Hatosy) gets busted and is sent to prep school, where he romances the upper-crusty but tolerant coed Jane Weston (Amy Smart), battles the evil dorm master, Mr. Funderberk (Timothy Crowe), befriends a picked-on nerd called Jizz (Jack Ferver), and learns a lot about life, love, and responsibility. There's also the obligatory face-off with his gruff, disappointed dad—Alec Baldwin, who uses an accent that careens between Rhode Island and Ralph Kramden. The soundtrack never lets you forget that it's 1974.—*K.M.* (Cinema 3rd Avenue, East 86th Street Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

Pather Panchali (1954)—This first film by the masterly Satyajit Ray—who was possibly the most unembarrassed and natural of directors—is a quiet reverie about the life of an impoverished Brahman family in a Bengali village. Beautiful, sometimes funny, and full of love, it brought a new vision of India to the screen. Though the central characters are the boy Apu and his mother and father and sister, the character who makes the strongest impression on you may be the ancient, parasitic, storytelling relative, played by the eighty-year-old Chunibala, a performer who apparently enjoyed coming back into the limelight after thirty years of obscurity—her wages paid for the narcotics she used daily. In Bengali.—*P.K.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Sept. 28.)

Romance—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (BAM Rose Cinemas, Eastside Playhouse, and Quad Cinema.)

Seduced and Abandoned (1964)—A lusty, vital satire of Sicilian mores—and a glory of Italian movie comedy. The wonderful Stefania Sandrelli plays a precocious but still innocent fifteen-year-old who loses her virginity to her sister's fiancé (Aldo Puglisi). He is absurdly creepy: a sexual snake in a grassless, hot, dusty town. Only partly a sex comedy, the film is mostly a parody of Sicilian propriety as embodied by Sandrelli's puffed-up quarry-owner father (Saro Urzi, who won Best Actor at Cannes). He instigates a frenzy of face-saving tactics, from a botched assassination to a kidnapping. What Diane Keaton's character in "The Godfather Part II" called "this Sicilian thing"—family honor and vendettas—here gets a coiling, farcical treatment. The movie is a masterpiece of mock verismo; everything accelerates into high-octane opera buffa. Pietro Germi directs with such deftness that he gets mileage from small laughs and can afford to tread lightly on big ones—like Puglisi's whining "I want a chaste wife!" In Italian.—*M.S.* (Walter Reade Theatre; Sept. 26.)

S.O.B. (1981)—Blake Edwards wrote and directed this broadside against Hollywood, and it's a sour mixture of slapstick, cynicism, and sentimentality. Robert Preston covers his thick head of graying hair with glory in the role of a hearty, imperturbable Dr. Feelgood, who gives all-purpose injections; Larry Storch has a bright scene as a guru; and Richard Mulligan is involved in a few funny sight gags. He plays a producer who cracks up after his hugely expensive film starring his wife (Julie Andrews) opens and closes practically simultaneously; wandering about his Malibu home in a suicidal stupor, he sinks through a hole in the second-story bedroom floor which has been covered with a large rug and lands gracefully in the middle of an orgy.—*P.K.* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 25.)

Speaking in Strings—Seconds into Paola di Florio's bio-documentary about the violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, one learns that the pivotal event in the musician's life was a failed suicide attempt. This essentially ensures that the viewer will approach Ms. Salerno-Sonnenberg's tale in a spirit of sympathy—a clever manipulation, given her reputation as one of the most brash, egotistical, and overwrought musicians currently treading the concert stage. One sees here a "from the gut," instinctual musician whose blue-collar sensibilities mesh precariously with a black-tie profession: imagine Rosie O'Donnell playing the Sibelius Concerto. And yet, whether one likes her music-making or not, she emerges from this film as sincere in her artistry, if tortured by her demons. One of these, the film suggests, may be her sexuality. Though this should be of no more than passing interest, Ms. di Florio repeatedly flirts with the question of lesbianism without providing the answer. In the end, the frequent references to "really strong women" and the violinist's "makeshift family" come across as annoyingly coy in what is otherwise an engaging portrait.—*James M. Keller* (Cinema Village.)

Stir of Echoes—The obvious "Sixth Sense" parallel aside—another kid with the power to communicate with the dead—director David Koepp's adaptation of Richard Matheson's novel borrows elements of "The Exorcist," "Close Encounters," "Poltergeist," and "Wait Until Dark," but the result is a pretty dull mess. Kevin Bacon stars as Tom (the kid's father), a working-class Chicago guy who never wanted to be famous, just not so ordinary. Welcome to extra-ordinary, pal. A doubter, he dares his sister-in-law Lisa (Illeana Douglas, in a smart-ass mode that wears thin) to hypnotize him, and—bang!—special-effects doors open up that give Tom the sight his son already possesses. The ensuing ghost story is short on dread, and the murder mystery unfolds without much suspense.—*K.M.* (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, and Union Square.)

West Beirut—The best début movies have a quality all their own—a kind of breathless, jolting ebullience, suggesting that young filmmakers would burst if they didn't get to tell their stories. The Lebanese director Ziad Doueiri is one such enthusiast; his movie has its rough patches and, toward the end, its slightly damp longueurs, but it nails a time and a place so firmly that, when it ends, you feel bereft. Based largely on Doueiri's own teen-age years, it stars his brother Rami as Tarek, a Beirut schoolboy with a sly smile. Tarek lives with his parents, Hala (Carmen Lebbos) and Riad (Joseph Bou Nassar), in the Muslim area of East Beirut; the tale begins in April, 1975, when sectarian rivalries split the city in two. Suddenly, Tarek and his friend Omar (Mohamad Chamas) are unable to attend school in the Eastern sector; the simple act of getting film developed involves a mortal risk. There are extraordinary scenes here, as moments of light comedy flip casually into the treacherous, and vice versa; if you want solid political history, the film is no more than an infuriating sketch, but as an exercise in the unpredictable it shows both nerve and charm. In Arabic.—*A.L.* (9/6/99) (Village East Cinemas.)

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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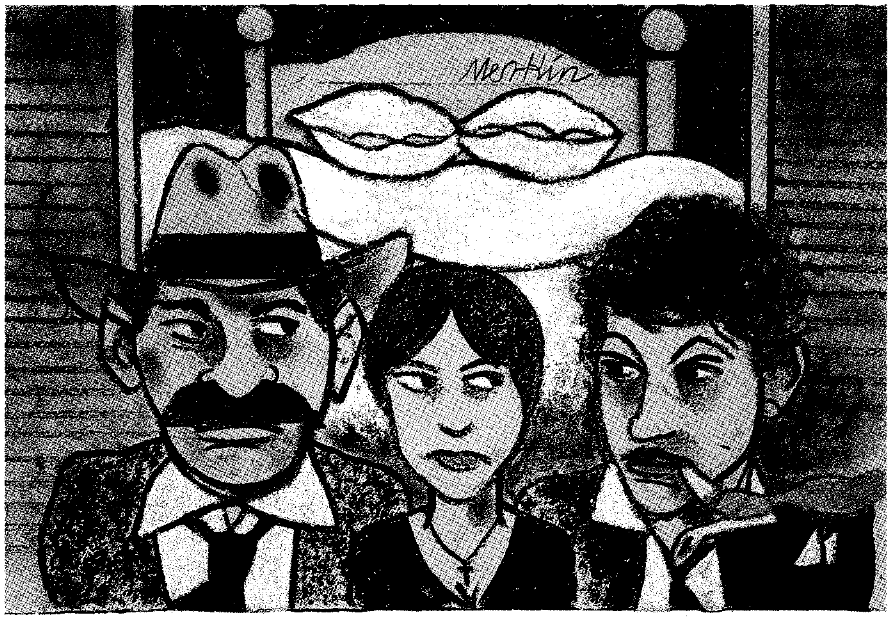
(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema I and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton I and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly I and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.



At the Walter Reade Theatre, Pietro Germi's "Seduced and Abandoned."

ALSO PLAYING

AMERICAN PIE (reviewed in our issue of 7/12/99): First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Union Square. . . . **AUSTIN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME** (7/5/99): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **BEDROOMS AND HALLWAYS:** Cinema Village. . . . **BETTER THAN CHOCOLATE:** The Screening Room. . . . **BLACK CAT, WHITE CAT:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT** (7/26/99): Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **BLUE STREAK:** Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **BOWFINGER** (8/16/99): Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, Orpheum VII, and State. . . . **BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS:** Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, and Lincoln Square. . . . **BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB:** Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **CALIGULA** (1979): Sutton and Village East Cinemas. . . . **CHILL FACTOR:** State and Union Square. . . . **DEEP BLUE SEA:** Criterion Center. . . . **THE DINNER GAME:** Paris. . . . **EYES WIDE SHUT** (7/26/99): The Screning Room and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **GET BRUCE!:** Chelsea Cinemas. . . . **LA GRANDE ILLUSION** (1937): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE HAUNTING** (8/2/99): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **HEAD ON:** Chelsea Cinemas. . . . **THE IDEAL HUSBAND** (7/5/99): Coronet Cinemas and Murray Hill Cinemas. . . . **ILLUMINATA:** Union Square. . . . **IN TOO DEEP:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, and East 86th Street Cinemas. . . . **LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL** (11/16/98 & 3/15/99; in English): Lincoln Square and 64th and 2nd. . . . **THE MATRIX** (4/26 & 5/3/99): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **MICKEY BLUE EYES:** Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and 64th and 2nd. . . . **THE MINUS MAN:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **THE MUSE** (9/13/99): Chelsea West, East 85th Street, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **MYSTERY MEN:** Union Square. . . . **PERFECT BLUE:** Cinema Village. . . . **THE RED VIOLIN** (6/14/99): East 86th Street Cinemas. . . . **RUNAWAY BRIDE** (8/9/99): Guild, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square. . . . **RUN LOLA RUN:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE SIXTH SENSE** (8/23-30/99): Cinema I, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE SOURCE:** BAM Rose Cinemas. . . . **SPLENDOR:** Quad Cinema. . . . **STAR WARS: EPISODE I—THE PHANTOM MENACE** (5/24/99): Union Square and Ziegfeld. . . . **STIGMATA:** Astor Plaza, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, Union Square, and Waverly. . . . **SUGAR TOWN:** 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Union Square. . . . **TARZAN** (7/5/99): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE TAXMAN:** 59th Street East Cinema and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE 13TH WARRIOR:** Chelsea Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, State, Sutton, and Union Square. . . . **THE THOMAS CROWN AFFAIR** (8/9/99): Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Union Square, and Waverly. . . . **THOSE WHO LOVE ME CAN TAKE THE TRAIN:** Cinema Village. . . . **TRICK:** Chelsea Cinemas.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

New York Film Festival—The first programs in a seventeen-day series of international films. **AVERY FISHER HALL:** Sept. 24 at 9: "All About My Mother" (Pedro Almodóvar; Spain). . . . Sept. 26 at 6:30: "Princess Mononoke" (Hayao Miyazaki; Japan). . . . **ALICE TULLY HALL:** Sept. 24 at 8:15: "All About My Mother." . . . Sept. 25 at 12:30: "The Edge of the World" (1937, Michael Powell; United Kingdom). . . . Sept. 25 at 3 and Sept. 26 at 9:30: "The Color of Heaven" (Majid Majidi; Iran). . . . Sept. 25 at 6 and Sept. 27 at 9: "Rien sur Robert" (Pascal Bonitzer; France). . . . Sept. 25 at 9 and Sept. 26 at 7: "The Carriers Are Waiting" (Benoît Mariage; Belgium and France). . . . Sept. 26 at 1:30 and Sept. 27 at 6: "License to Live" (Kiyoshi Kurosawa; Japan). . . . Sept. 26 at 4:30: "Sicilia!" (Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet; France). . . . Sept. 28 at 6: "The Letter" (Manuel de Oliveira; France and Portugal). . . . Sept. 28 at 9: "Beau Travail" (Claire Denis; France). (For tickets, call 875-5050.)

Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Closed for renovations until Oct. 13.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of animated films made by Studio Ghibli, Japan. Sept. 23 at 2:30: "PomPoko" (1994, Isao Takahata; in Japanese). . . . Sept. 25 at noon: "Castle in the Sky" (1986, Hayao Miyazaki; in Japanese). . . . Sept. 25 at 3: "My Neighbor Totoro" (1988, Miyazaki). . . . Sept. 26 at noon: "Kiki's Delivery Service" (†). . . . ¶ A program of films directed by Benjamin Christensen. Sept. 23 at 6: "The Child" (1940; in Danish). . . . Sept. 24 at 2:30: "Mikaël" (1924; silent, with German intertitles and English voice-over). . . . Sept. 24 at 5: "The Devil's Circus" (1926; silent, with English intertitles). . . . Sept. 25 at 2:30: "Witch" (1922; silent, with English intertitles). . . . Sept. 25 at 5: "Seven Footprints to Satan" (1929; silent, with Danish intertitles and English voice-over). . . . Sept. 26 at 2:30: "Mockery" (1927; silent, with English intertitles). . . . Sept. 26 at 5: "Come Home with Me" (1941; in Danish). . . . ¶ A program of films representing all elements of the life of Noël Coward—writing, acting, directing. Sept. 23 at 6 and Sept. 27 at 2:30: "Brief Encounter" (†). . . . Sept. 24 at 2:30: "The Queen Was in the Parlour" (1927, Graham Cutts; silent), play by Coward; and "Easy Virtue" (1927, Alfred Hitchcock; silent), play by Coward. . . . Sept. 24 and Sept. 27 at 6: "Bitter Sweet" (1933, Herbert Wilcox), play by Coward. . . . Sept. 24 at 8 and Sept. 28 at 2:30: "In Which We Serve" (†). . . . Sept. 25 at 5: "The Queen Was in the Parlour." . . . Sept. 26 at 2:30: "Cavalcade" (†). . . . Sept. 26 at 5 and Sept. 28 at 6: "This Happy Breed" (1944, David Lean), play and music by Coward. . . . ¶ Sept. 27 at 6: A program of more than a hundred 1998 award-winning British television and cinema commercials.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Sept. 22-23 at 7 and Sept. 24 at 4 and 7:30: "The Saragossa Manuscript" (1964, Wojciech Has; in Polish). . . . ¶ A program of films directed by Pietro Germi; in Italian, with English subtitles. Sept. 25 at 1 and Sept. 27 at 4 and 8:15: "In the Name of the Law" (1948). . . . Sept. 25 at 3:15 and Sept. 28 at 4 and 8:15: "The Way of Hope" (1950). . . . Sept. 26 at 1: "The Facts of Murder" (1959). . . . Sept. 26 at 6: "Seduced and Abandoned" (†). . . . Sept. 26 at 8:45: "The Birds, the Bees and the Italians" (1965). . . . Sept. 27 at 6:15: "Four Ways Out" (1951). . . . Sept. 28 at 6:15: "The Brigand of Tacca di Lupo" (1952).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of Blake Edwards films. Sept. 25 at 2: "10" (1979). Mr. Edwards will be present. . . . Sept. 25 at 5:30: "S.O.B." (†). . . . Sept. 26 at 2: "Darling Lili" (1970). . . . Sept. 26 at 5: "Victor/Victoria" (1982).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Sept. 26 at 7, the feature will be "Querelle" (1982, Rainer Werner Fassbinder).

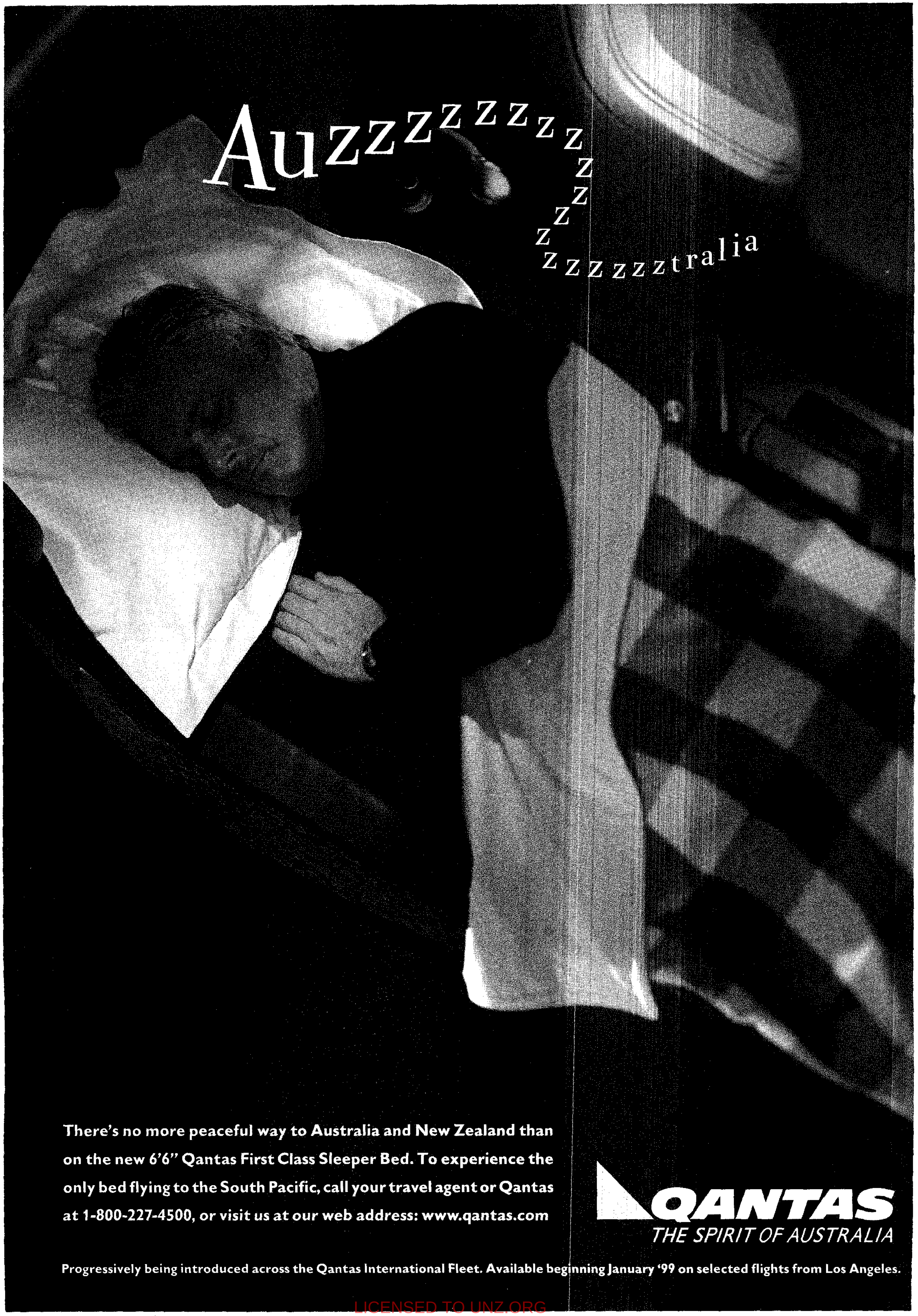
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Sept. 28 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "A Family Resemblance" (1996, Cédric Klapisch; in French).

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—A program of television shows featuring Noël Coward works. Through Sept. 23: "Ford Star Jubilee: Together with Music" (1955), with Coward and Mary Martin. . . . From Sept. 24: "Ford Star Jubilee: Blithe Spirit" (1956, Coward), with Coward, Lauren Bacall, and Claudette Colbert. (Tuesdays through Sundays at 2:30.) . . . ¶ From Sept. 24: Parts I and II of Dennis Potter's "Pennies from Heaven" (1978), with Bob Hoskins. (Tuesdays through Saturdays at 1:30.)

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (570-3949)—A program of films featuring Egypt. At the Uris Center Auditorium: Sept. 25 at 4 and 6:30, "Land of the Pharaohs" (1955, Howard Hawks). . . . ¶ At the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium: Sept. 28 at 6, "The Mummy" (1932, Karl Freund). . . . Sept. 28 at 8: "Cleopatra" (1963, Joseph L. Mankiewicz).

BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—Sept. 22: "White" (1994, Krzysztof Kieślowski; in French). . . . Sept. 23: "Red" (1994, Kieślowski; in French). . . . Sept. 24: "Bitter Sweet" (1933, Herbert Wilcox). . . . Sept. 25: "Cavalcade" (†). . . . Sept. 26: "Sullivan's Travels" (1941, Preston Sturges). . . . Sept. 27: "Ivan the Terrible, Part II" (1944, Sergei Eisenstein; in Russian). . . . Sept. 28: "Pather Panchali" (†).

RICHARD MERKIN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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

Mother Nature stalks city.

One of the pleasures of New York life has always been our cozy distance from natural disasters, those Biblical and televised occasions when a hurricane flattens a swath of South Florida, when a twister peels the roof off a sports arena in Salt Lake City, when a flooded Midwestern town becomes an artless Venice of floating stumps and Buicks. Having successfully navigated the unnatural disasters that lurk in the subways and on the streets, a New Yorker can finally walk through the door in the warmth of an evening, tune in to the Weather Channel, suppress his self-satisfaction, his meteorological Schadenfreude, and watch his fellow, but faraway, Americans paddle canoes up Main Street. It was Woody Allen who happily declared, "I am at two with nature"—and so are most New Yorkers. Some even take this safe distance as their just reward for enduring the gropes and elbows on the Lexington Avenue express at rush hour, their recompense for the way the fetid, rainless summer left the city smelling like a locker room at the Y.

But that was then. This is now: the long drought and the showers that followed roused into life a swarm of lethal mosquitoes. Three New Yorkers died of encephalitis, many more fell ill, and suddenly seven million people were living in dread of that itchy emblem of the summer picnic, the mosquito bite. Every bug and airborne mite in the city now seemed as ominous as the killer crows and eye-plucking gulls who terrorized Tippi Hedren in "The Birds." The city agencies planned. The hospitals mobilized. The Greek chorus of tabloids sang a harmonious supplication: the front pages of both the *Post* and the *News* cried out, "LET US SPRAY." On the Mayor's order, fixed-wing planes, humpbacked trucks, and angling helicopters swept over the five boroughs spritzing parks and stone canyons alike with malathion and pyrethroid, which did much to kill bugs but little to soothe anxiety. (Toxic insecticides! Black helicopters!) The Mayor assured everyone that the mosquitoes would turn tail, cough their last, and drop dead.

"They can't breed if they're dead, right?" he fairly growled.

The mosquitoes, for their part, proved plucky, and could not help becoming an issue in the New York Senate race. "I have been concerned about malaria for many years," the First Lady intoned obscurely as her listening tour reached Long Island. Yes, but what of it, the press wondered. Was Hillary really listening?

In the news narrative, a crisis, real or imagined, "leads to new fears, " and so an Op-Ed in the *Times* came along to remind us that "if you think the current outbreak of mosquito-carried encephalitis in New York is bad, wait until you see what's coming." The paper went on to describe the killer bees now "terrorizing" South and Central America and "spreading throughout" the American Southwest; the fire ants, a "hard-biting venom-injecting" insect from Argentina now present "in epidemic proportions in southern states from California to Florida"; the olive fruit flies invading the counties of California. "And that's not to mention our current urban pests—cockroaches, rats, raccoons and fleas—which will only multiply."

As the mosquito scourge seemed to ease, the collective hysteria only increased. A hurricane was coming our way! Watch out for Floyd! Again, the Mayor mobilized. Schools slammed their doors closed. Executives were urged to empty the offices of midtown by Thursday noon. In Chelsea, the manager of a Blimpie blocked his windows with plywood, but, being inexperienced in such matters, he put the wood inside the glass.

Apocalypse, as it turned out, was merely a nasty storm. Buildings didn't fall, though they did get very wet. Even that was a horror. Some experts on the Rolodex opined that perhaps the gusts and sheets of rain would, at least, wash away the mosquitoes, but the voices of doom were louder, more convincing. Professor Wayne Rowley, of Iowa State University, told us that he had been "chasing mosquitoes around the world" for thirty-five years, and if we thought the rain would do the trick we were sorely mistaken.

"It may even *enhance* the problem," he said. "Mosquitoes are very resilient. They hide in microhabitats: storm sewers, buildings." Others said that the fresh presence of still water—puddles everywhere—would give mosquitoes new places to lay their eggs. Dr. Roger Nasci, of the Centers for Disease Control, said the short-term effect of Floyd in New York would surely be a "stocking up of blood-hungry females." Anyone who has seen the fanged Lauren Hutton in "Once Bitten" knows this is not good.

The rains passed, and so, too, will the mosquitoes, and yet we begin the new week uneasily. It seems so long ago that city dwellers of the upper classes fled the boroughs for the countryside in summer, the better to avoid mosquitoes and malaria. We thought that gentle Frederick Law Olmsted and megalomaniacal Robert Moses had wrangled the wilderness into those manicured exhibits called parks. We walk through them like museumgoers taking in the stuffed mastodons (look at what once roamed the earth!) and feel reassured (you're not so mighty now, are you?). We felt free of Nature. But were we wrong? Is no one safe from the reaches of our Mother?

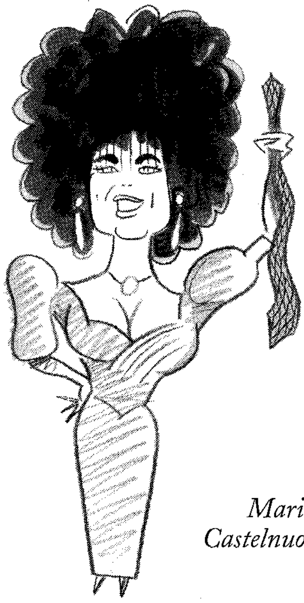
—DAVID REMNICK

DEPT. OF EVIDENCE

The Italian Elizabeth Taylor takes on Monica Lewinsky.

Most people would be surprised to learn that there is a connection between Italy's foremost Elizabeth Taylor impersonator and Kenneth Starr's investigation of the Monica Lewinsky matter. But when Marina Castelnuovo came to New York last week—for a party at Ivana Trump's house and a look at the fashion shows—she also sought to settle one of the lingering mysteries of the fast-fading national preoccupation with the former White House intern.

"I am hearing all my life that I look like Elizabeth Taylor," Castelnuovo said, and it's no wonder. Her wide dark eyes, big hair, and major décolletage—a look that evokes the movie star in her Mrs. John Warner period—stop pedestrians cold. Castelnuovo, a mother of two, has been impersonating Taylor professionally at Italian fashion shows and other public events since 1993. In 1996, she met the entertainer Roger Clinton, the President's brother, through mutual friends.



Marina Castelnuovo

In December of that year, Roger was performing in Italy, and Castelnuovo took him Christmas shopping in Rome, an expedition that was covered by Italian television. "I was his model. I try on things for his wife, for Hillary, for Chelsea," she said. "We wanted to buy also some Italian fashion for his brother, so when I saw this beautiful gold-and-blue pattern tie, I knew he had to buy that one. There were three or four that he bought, but that one hitted me."

A year and a half later, Monica Lewinsky noticed that Bill Clinton was wearing the gold-and-blue Ermenegildo Zegna necktie on the day she first testified before the grand jury. She told Starr's investigators that she believed she had given Clinton the tie, and that she had told him, "I like it when you wear my ties because then I know I'm close to your heart." During Clinton's appearance before the grand jury, prosecutors grilled him about whether, with his choice of neckwear, he was sending Lewinsky a message—a special plea to protect him.

When Castelnuovo saw the international news reports about the tie (which tabloid reporters quickly dubbed "the love tie"), she was moved to write to David Kendall, the President's personal attorney. "With enormous excitement and big shock," she wrote, "I have immediately recognized, without a shadow of a doubt, that it was one of the ties I had suggested Roger to buy for his brother as 'SPECIAL ITALIAN SOUVENIR.'" Castelnuovo remains convinced that she and Roger, not the President's young girlfriend, purchased the Zegna necktie.

The situation seems likely to remain murky. "Some White House lawyers called me about this last summer," Roger Clinton said last week, "and they said, 'We want to send you photographs of this tie and see if you bought it.' My brother and I have been going back and forth with ties for years, and I did buy some ties for him with Marina in this Rodeo Drive-looking district in Rome. But I've looked at the tie, and I couldn't swear to you that that was the tie I bought him or not." A person familiar with Bill Clinton's defense said that the President has no clear memory of the blue-and-gold tie's provenance, either, although he has consistently denied that he dressed with an eye toward obstructing justice on August 6, 1998. The Italian television broadcast of Roger and Marina's shopping expedition does not show closeups of any tie purchases. And the Starr team ultimately did not include the accusation in its impeachment report to Congress.

But Castelnuovo is certain about the love tie. As she walked around the Upper East Side last week, distracting onlookers with her plunging halter top and tight trousers, she said, "I am—you think?—a little part of history, no?"

—JEFFREY TOOBIN

COMEBACK DEPARTMENT

The season's literary "It" boy is two hundred and sixteen years old.

The literary potboiler is the Holy Grail of book publishing. Combining brisk sales and celebratory reviews, it is the rare novel that enables a beleaguered editor to feel that he is simultaneously serving the cause of culture and shoring up his company's bottom line. In the last few weeks, an epic tale of war, love, sex, politics, and religion has been accomplishing this trick with great aplomb. One noted critic included it "among the dozen finest novels we possess"; another called it "the novel that

Machiavelli would write if he were living." Sales have been similarly impressive. It is currently in its fourth printing, and bookstores all across the city are having difficulty keeping it in stock. Needless to say, Hollywood has been inquiring about the availability of movie rights.

The novel is Stendhal's "The Charterhouse of Parma," originally published, to great acclaim, in 1839 (the above quotes are from Henry James and Balzac). The new edition, translated by Richard Howard, a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, and published in a beautifully illustrated edition by Modern Library, has an unusual history. Two years ago, Ben Sonnenberg, the wealthy patron of the arts and the founder of the literary journal *Grand Street*, realized that there was no good modern translation of his favorite French novel. "The Charterhouse of Parma" had made a lasting impression on Sonnenberg when, as an aesthete-in-training living in Paris during his early twenties, he first read it. "I thought that Stendhal—along with Shakespeare, Balzac, and Jane Austen—was the author you needed to read in order to know everything about life," he said the other day.

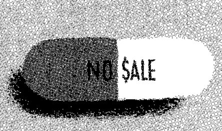
Although Sonnenberg, who suffers from multiple sclerosis, is now confined to a wheelchair, he is still a literary operator; his Riverside Drive study is one of New York's few remaining intellectual salons. He decided that his friend Richard Howard—whose translations of Gide and Baudelaire are considered modern classics—would be an ideal translator for Stendhal's masterpiece. Continuing his practice of paying talented writers generously, he offered Howard an unusually large fee and asked Modern Library if it would be interested in publishing it.

In an arrangement reminiscent of the circumstances under which the novel was originally composed (Stendhal dictated "The Charterhouse of Parma" to a copyist in the course of a fifty-two-day burst of inspiration), Howard translated a chapter each week and brought it over to Sonnenberg's apartment to read it out loud, and together they fine-tuned the work in progress. The story of Fabrizio del Dongo, an impetuous young aristocrat who joins Napoleon's Army just before the Battle of Waterloo, the book has an action-packed narrative that lends itself to this kind of dramatic presentation. "It was a wonderful experience to read it as if I were an actor," Howard says. "Every translator needs a director, and working with Ben was like having my own private one." The book was published last February and posted modest sales until a few weeks ago, when rave reviews appeared almost simultaneously in the New York *Times Book Review* (which ran an unusually long piece), *The New York Review of Books*, and the Los Angeles *Times'* book-review section, where Edmund White declared that " 'The Charterhouse of Parma' has never sparkled in English with such radiance as it does in Richard Howard's new translation." Although Modern Library has tried to satisfy the sudden demand by quintupling the number of copies in print, there are virtually no books currently available. "I haven't seen such a scramble for a book in a long, long time," said Rob Schumann, the general manager of Book Hampton, which has sold out its stock twice so far.

While intending to do good, Sonnenberg and Howard may end up doing quite well. "This edition of 'The Charterhouse of Parma' ranks as one of the Modern Library's fastest hardcover bestsellers," the Modern Library publisher David Ebershoff said. "It will be assigned in schools for the next twenty-five years." Sonnenberg said, "I am astonished to find myself associated with something that might actually make money. In all my life, that has never happened to me." —ROBERT S. BOYNTON

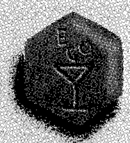
THE NEW PILLS FOR FALL

by Bob Morris



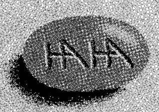
RETURNITAL

Alleviates anxiety of returning merchandise to department stores.



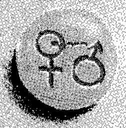
HUBRIX

A neuropeptide that boosts self-importance at pitch meetings and book parties.



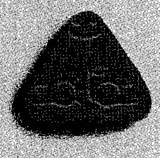
LIMEREX

Inhibits impulse to E-mail jokes and poems.



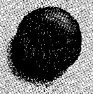
RU-4-ME

Improves judgment of single women about to have sex with eligible-seeming men.



PERCEPTIA

Induces euphoric acceptance of hair loss, weight gain, impotence, and other natural symptoms of aging. Side effects may include verbal seepage.



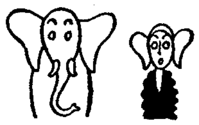
KUBRIX

Activates enjoyment of "Eyes Wide Shut." Well tolerated with hallucinogens.

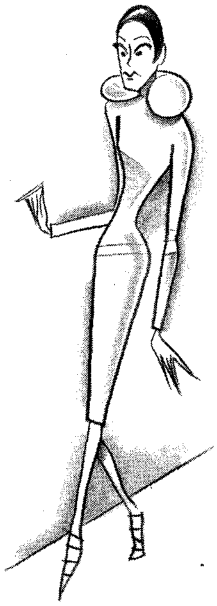
RICHARD MCGUIRE

RAG TRADE

The neck brace as accessory.



It has always been the goal of the better suitcase companies to create luggage that, in elegance and rightness of form, aspires to the condition of clothing, but it has only recently become the ambition of Samsonite to create clothing that aspires to the condition of luggage. Earlier this year, the company's new designer, Neil Barrett (formerly of Prada), put together its first two collections. Barrett's garments include a hold-all beach item that, according to a publicist, "you wear around your waist like a marsupial"; the Voice Jacket (which has a built-in personal message recorder and a tiny microphone); the Temperature Jacket, whose paraffin-filled micromolecules maintain a constant body temperature; and, perhaps most stylish of all, the down-filled Travel Pillow Jacket, whose collar contains a large, inflatable neck pillow, for spur-of-the-moment naps. Barrett designed his collection in a strictly practical vein, aiming for comfort without ostentation. As he put it, "the idea was to have something that wasn't obvious, because if it was obvious it would be too much."



Neck support by Helmut Lang

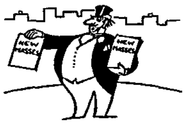
Oddly, at the same time that Barrett was designing his Travel Pillow Jacket, both Helmut Lang and the London couture designer Hussein Chalayan were moved to create similar garments. Chalayan made a leather-covered foam contraption, inspired by a car headrest, that resembles a generously proportioned neck brace; he had his runway models wear it over sleeveless shift dresses. And Lang showed a detachable neck-support cushion (available in cashmere silk, organza silk, and satin) that, in its subtle slimness of form, suggests comfort rather than provides it. Chalayan explained his headrest thus: "I think everything evolves from the body, so it was the idea of looking at how the body is accommodated within technology, and then putting it back onto the body again, to create this new juxtaposition. I looked at this idea of car interiors and speed because speed is something that evolves from the body's natural state. You know, you can walk, but you can't walk as fast as a car." Lang, too, pointed to an expanded conception of clothing, albeit in a more gnomic vein. "It is about clothes accessories and accessory clothes to widen the range of garments," he said. "It is a new way of working with form and function as we head into a new century. Organic shapes are opening a new volume of possibilities."

If Barrett, Chalayan, and Lang had been alone in the business of creating peculiar neck garments that appropriate the functions of household equipment, their joint appearance in the same season might be dismissed as a coincidence; but a fourth designer has ventured into this suddenly crowded field. Sharper Image recently advertised a portable neck-worn air-conditioner: a metal-and-plastic collar containing a tiny fan, known as the Personal Cooling SystemTM. This conjunction can only suggest that, in the future, still other furnishings and appliances will find their way onto the body.

The trend promises a certain convenience, but not without a price. Once we affix to ourselves the means for such natural functions as sleeping, heating, cooling, and driving, can the beaded couture oxygen mask be far behind? —LARISSA MACFARQUHAR

L.A. POSTCARD

The Cold War thrives in sunny California.

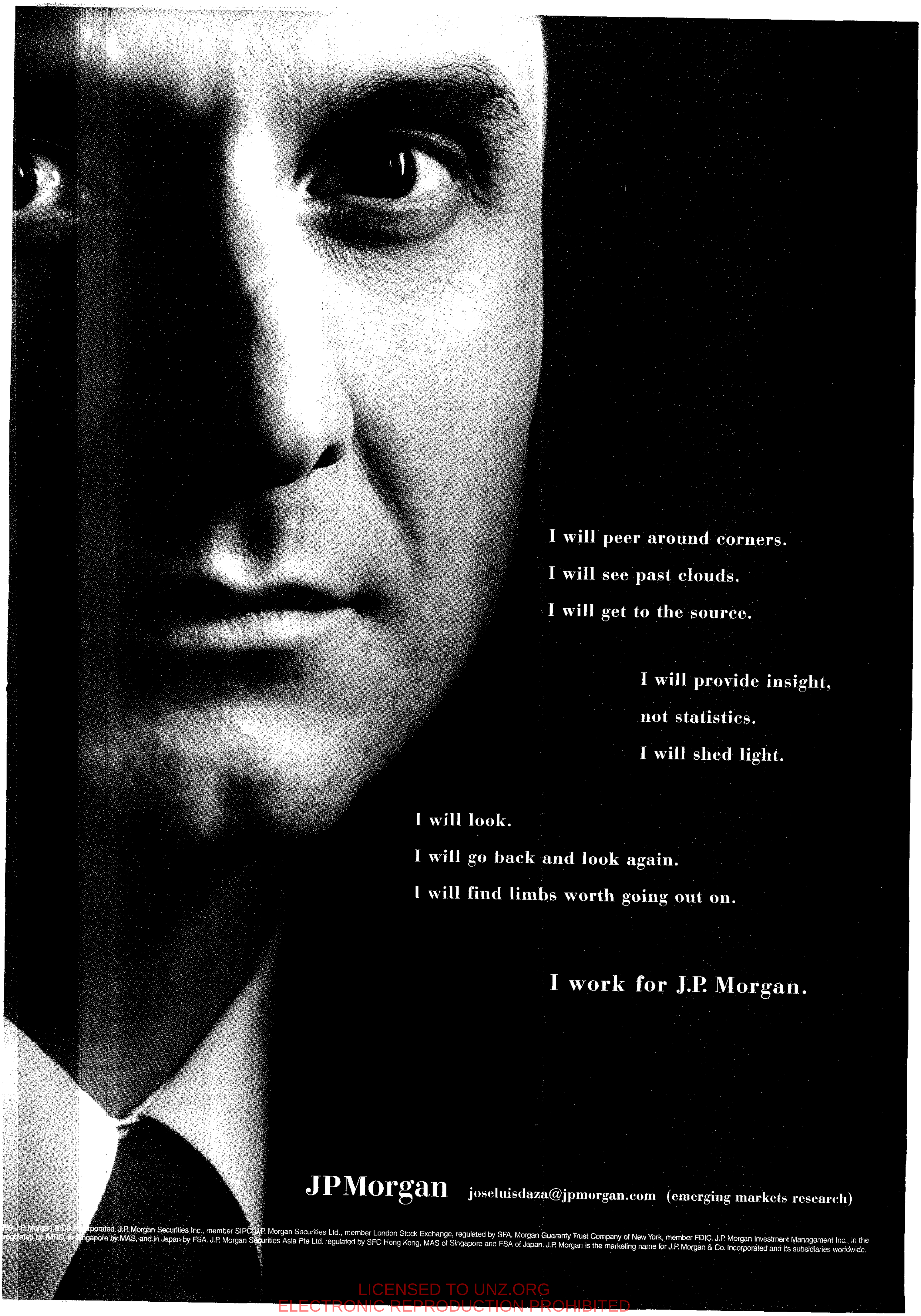


TWO and a half years ago, when the New York publisher Steve Wasserman left his job as editorial director of Times Books and went west to give the Los Angeles *Times*' book-review section a transfusion of highbrow culture, he expected to be called a few names. "Pointy-headed," "Eastern élitist," and, not for the first time in his life, "arrogant." But "radical leftist" was one label Wasserman hadn't anticipated.

Wasserman, an erudite forty-seven-year-old who speaks in theatrically perfect sentences, says that he is the victim of a "campaign" waged by David Horowitz, a right-wing cultural critic. "It's very tedious to deal with what should rightfully be called by its proper name: Red-baiting," Wasserman said recently. Horowitz, a field marshal in the culture wars, is himself a former left-wing radical. He led protests against the Vietnam War, consorted with the Black Panthers, and once edited the bible of radical chic, *Ramparts*. During the nineteen-seventies and eighties, though, Horowitz underwent a political conversion, and he now runs a conservative think tank called the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, in L.A. Horowitz seems to have singled out Wasserman as an enemy, accusing him, as he put it in a recent column in the on-line journal *Salon*, of "relentlessly censoring" conservative views.

Horowitz's attacks began almost as soon as Wasserman took over the book-review section. In an article about the L.A. *Times* in the now defunct *Buzz*, for instance, Horowitz was the unnamed source for a report that Wasserman learned how to make bombs from Tom Hayden. (In a letter to the editor, Horowitz said that the story was secondhand and that he had told the reporter to check it with Wasserman, who denies it.) The tension escalated in 1998, when Wasserman published a lengthy introduction to a reissue of Marx's "Communist Manifesto" by the Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm. Infuriated, Horowitz widened his target, and began to write vitriolic columns in *Salon* accusing the L.A. *Times* of harboring leftists, including not only Wasserman but Robert Scheer, a contributing editor of the paper, and Janet Clayton, the editorial-page editor. As proof, Horowitz noted that Clayton's living room, which he had observed during a Christmas party, was "tellingly adorned with an iconic portrait of Jesse Jackson." (Clayton says that a landscape, not a picture of the Reverend Jackson, hangs on her living-room wall; she does, however, have a photograph of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X in her library.)

Wasserman is dismissive. "David Horowitz never lets the facts stand in the way of a good rant," he said. "The old categories of left and right have been exploded by events in the closing years of this century, and have very little meaning today. But his eyes are on the rear-view mirror." Still, Carlin Romano, the literary critic for the Philadelphia *Inquirer* and the former president of the National Book Critics Circle, when he was asked what he made of Horowitz's charges, examined a hundred and ninety-four issues of Wasserman's book review and reluctantly came to the con-



I will peer around corners.
I will see past clouds.
I will get to the source.

I will provide insight,
not statistics.
I will shed light.

I will look.
I will go back and look again.
I will find limbs worth going out on.

I work for J.P. Morgan.

JPMorgan joseluisdaza@jpmorgan.com (emerging markets research)

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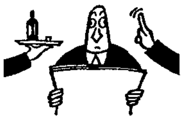
clusion that Horowitz might not be all wrong: Wasserman's regular reviewers, Romano said, "are almost uniformly writers identified with the left." But, he suggested, this bias only provides balance to the New York *Times Book Review,* which, he says, "favors neo-conservatives." —JANE MAYER

LONDON POSTCARD

Will absinthe replace Marmite as the worst-tasting British treat?



The young advertising copywriter who first told me about the popularity of absinthe in London swore that he'd sampled it the night before at a bar called Alphabet, on Bow Street in Soho. Bow Street lies in Covent Garden, not Soho, and that's not where Alphabet is, anyway. But my informant was half right; absinthe, the apéritif that helped drive Vincent van Gogh insane, is indeed the craze in London bars—and potent enough to make you forget where you drank it.

"All I remember is that I made a complete prat of myself and ended up like a wino, searching for doorways to lie in," Krissy Schmidt, a twenty-eight-year-old chef, recalled of her first and only experiment with absinthe. "I came to about two days later with a truly hideous hangover."

Absinthe has an alcohol content of seventy per cent, almost double that of most spirits, and is steeped in herbs that are reputed to have hallucinogenic powers—principally wormwood, an aromatic shrub containing a chemical that can cause numbness, delirium, and "loss of intellect," though researchers say that such effects would occur only with chronic use. The jade-hued drink became the elixir of fin-de-siècle bohemians, who believed that the "Green Fairy" stoked their creativity. Manet, Degas, van Gogh, and Picasso all painted it; Toulouse-Lautrec carried an emergency supply inside a hollow cane; Symbolists wrote verse about it; and Oscar Wilde declared absinthe "as poetical as anything in the world."

But excessive use also led to absinthism, a syndrome characterized by tremors, delusions, and convulsions. France, the United States, and other countries banned absinthe in the early twentieth century, but Britain never did. Still, no British company manufactured it, and it was virtually forgotten until last year, when a company called Green Bohemia began importing absinthe from the Czech Republic. Giddy reports about its effects quickly followed, including one newspaper story that termed absinthe "the upper-class version of free-basing." The drink is now served at some forty London bars. Keith Steven, who works at a liquor shop where absinthe costs eighty dollars a bottle, says, "It's the flavor of the month, the way melon vodka was a year ago."

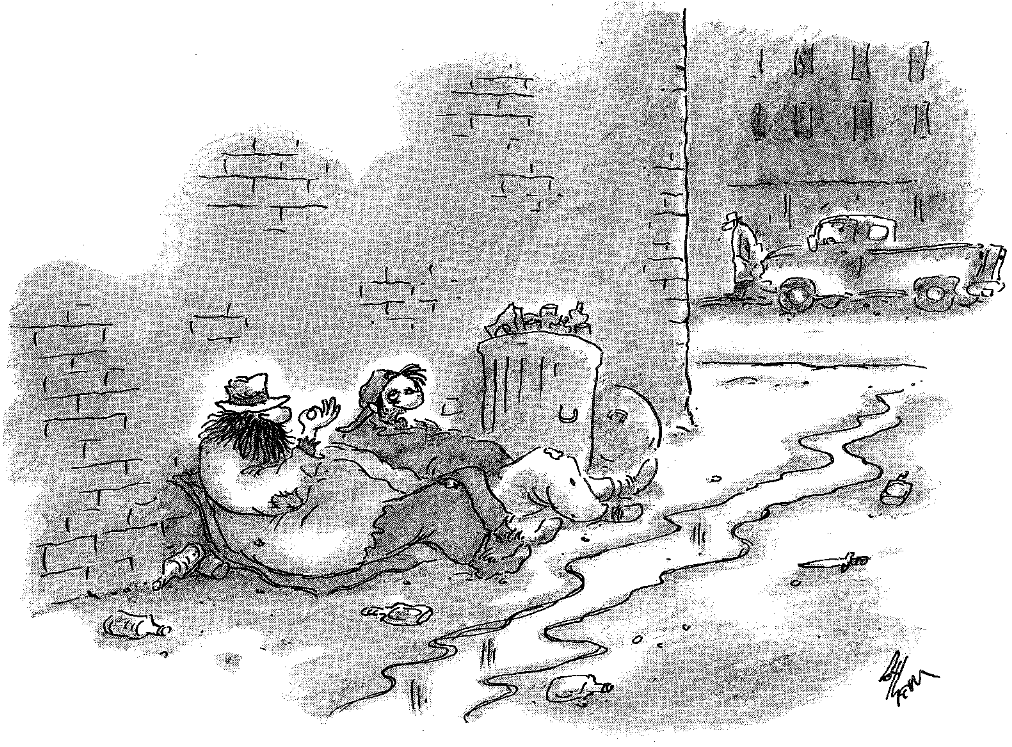
The pleasure of drinking absinthe is more folkloric than gastronomic. Absinthe is the color of Scope and so bitter and strong that drinking it straight is like downing antifreeze. It is typically served in a snifter, with water and a sugar cube added, and set aflame. This makes the drink cloudy, but not much more palatable.

Absinthe's taste may be one reason that many London drinkers prefer to down it in a gulp, often with a beer chaser. (The French bohemians liked to linger over their absinthe, courting a steady, dreamlike state.) A female customer at a Soho club called Lab was recently carried off in an ambulance after she drank six or so absinthes and fell into a coma.

Lab charges fifteen dollars for absinthe, in part to discourage overindulgence. Down the street, at a bar called Blues, the owner, James Offer, imposed a two-absinthe limit after consulting a lawyer. "It's a test case waiting to happen," Offer said of absinthe. Despite Offer's caution, one Blues patron recently set the bar's floor on fire while trying to blow out the flame in his absinthe snifter.

Back at Lab, Mark van de Vyver, a psychiatrist specializing in alcohol abuse, was searching for a friend who had downed several absinthes and then vanished. Dr. van de Vyver offered a profile of the typical absinthe drinker. "It's people like my mate, who feel, 'If it's decadent, if it's on the edge, I'm there,'" he said. "But where is he? Stabbing people? Cutting off his ear?"

Van de Vyver's friend finally returned, his face roughly the same shade as his drink. "I'll have water," he told the bartender. "Make that a double." —TONY HORWITZ



"That's a mighty big louse, but I'd hardly call it the louse of the century."

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THE POLITICAL SCENE

WHERE'S THE MUSIC?

Why no one's listening to what the candidates have to say.

BY JOE KLEIN

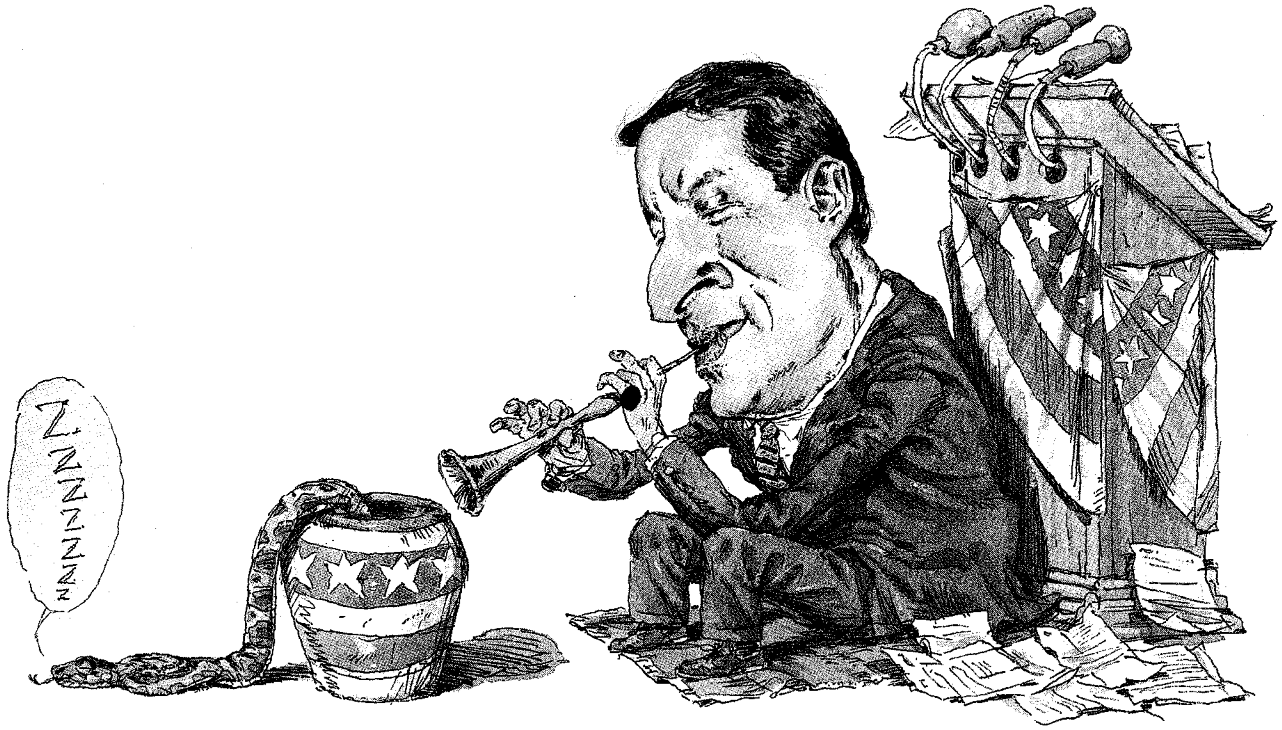
On the day after Labor Day, Vice-President Albert Gore, Jr., ventured once more—ever admirably, if never nimbly—into the densest, thorniest public-policy thicket of all. At the Childrens Hospital in Los Angeles, he proposed specific ways to expand health-care coverage to the working poor. The speech was detailed and thoughtful. It represented one of the first significant attempts to address the inequities of the American health-insurance system since Hillary Rodham Clinton's universal-coverage plan of 1993, although the Vice-President was careful to distance himself from that effort—to the point of underplaying the importance of his own proposal. Gore read his words from a teleprompter, briskly and quietly, and not ineffectively. Yet there were no memorable lines, few oratorical flourishes, only a grudging sound bite or two. The next morning, his proposal was front-page news in the New York *Times* but not in the Washington *Post*—nor did it create much of a ripple on the cable news stations, talk radio, and the op-ed pages. A day later, it was pretty much forgotten.

The solid, sensible policy speech has been Gore's signature in this preëlection year—he has delivered eight already, on topics ranging from education to poverty to tax policy—and he has not been alone. If the Presidential campaign has been notable in any way, it has been for the depth and seriousness of its policy proposals and for the number of candidates who have made them. In other years, a stray hopeful or two might wander off into creative wonkery—Bill Clinton and Paul Tsongas certainly did in 1992, and so did Jack Kemp and Bruce Babbitt in 1988, Gary Hart in 1984, and John Anderson in 1980—but this time just about every major candidate has proposed at least one significant, politically risky initiative. Unfortunately, never have so many been so admirable to so little effect.

A week before Gore's health-care speech, the Republican front-runner, George W. Bush, who has often been criticized for a lack of specificity, delivered a detailed, potentially controversial, and widely overlooked speech on public education. (Earlier in the summer, he also gave a surprising speech on social policy, in which he advocated, among other things, a major increase in spending on anti-poverty efforts.) Gore's opponent in the Democratic primaries, Bill Bradley, has already proposed dramatic reforms in gun control—he is the first candidate to propose the registration of handguns and the licensing of gun owners—and in campaign finance, and Bradley has promised that he will reveal a full-fledged universal-health-coverage proposal this fall. Bush's Republican opponent Steve Forbes, a conservative, delivers a stump speech almost entirely composed of thoughtful, if extremely libertarian, solutions to a variety of economic and social problems. Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona, is known for his boldness on campaign-finance reform and foreign policy. Even Elizabeth Dole, who will never be accused of substance abuse, has taken specific, controversial positions on some foreign-policy questions, and on gun control.

And yet the campaign seems a snooze; the candidates, anodyne and interchangeable. The public remains determinedly uninterested. This will change a bit, as the too-abrupt primary season—a six-week spasm of elections beginning in Iowa next January 31st—approaches. (Most likely, the nominees will be chosen by March 7th, when New York, California, and thirteen other states weigh in.) But the current, quasi-comatose state of affairs raises an essential question about public life in the Information Age: If, as we are ceaselessly told, there has been a collision of politics, celebrity, and entertainment, why are the people who are running for President in the emptily portentous year 2000 so crashingly dull?

This is a question that the actor Warren Beatty has raised, implicitly, as he tiptoes around a prospective Presidential candidacy of his own, and has answered, implicitly, in his movie "Bulworth"—although Beatty the politician doesn't seem nearly as adventurous, or as interesting, as Beatty the filmmaker. Indeed, the actor, when asked about the sterility of modern politics, usually responds in stodgily anachronistic left-wing terms, and becomes as boring as any of the mainstream politicians he disdains.



It is style—playfulness, eloquence, spontaneity—far more than substance, that is missing from our bleached, anorexic politics.

JOHN CUNEO

Beatty's real gripe is probably more about style than about substance, in any case. He describes himself as a Roosevelt-Truman-Stevenson-Kennedy Democrat, but they were all far more moderate than he imagines himself to be. What Beatty really misses—what we all miss—is the inspiration of Franklin Roosevelt, the spontaneity of Harry Truman, the eloquence of Adlai Stevenson, the dash of John Kennedy. For nostalgic Republicans, the grand themes of Ronald Reagan serve a similar romantic purpose. For it is style, far more than substance, that is missing from our bleached, anorexic contemporary politics. It is playfulness and eloquence, charm and musicality, spontaneity and passion and inspiration.

The public longing for political pizzazz is routinely disdained by academics and ideologues, and it is certainly true that today's politics is dominated by sound bites, photo ops, and other synthetic insubstantialities. But style—true style, the public demonstration of a candidate's strength and humanity—is among the essential, and eternal, components of leadership; without it, a leader will have trouble establishing the emotional authority he, or she, will need in order to be followed. In the twentieth century, as radio and then television began to give the public a more immediate sense of the candidates they were voting for, nuances of style in Presidential campaigns have repeatedly been more important than nuances of substance. In fact, ever since Franklin Roosevelt, a simple rule has obtained: the warmer, more personable candidate always wins (except, of course, for that most exceptional of exceptions—Richard Nixon). That will probably be true in this election, too, but the elements of political style—now firmly in the grip of consultants and speechwriters—have begun to seem less spontaneous, less real, less true.

"AL GORE is hitting all the right notes," laments Al From, the president of the Democratic Leadership Council, "but he has to learn how to turn those notes into music. In a Presidential campaign, you don't win with issues, you win with themes."

"There isn't much fun anymore in politics," Peggy Noonan, the Republican speechwriter, says. "The prissy and the pious and the cautious have taken over. They forget what Reagan and Margaret Thatcher knew: Don't think small-bore. They both thought they were in the history business, and they thought that history was big and emotional and symphonic. Reagan was emotional about the size of government. He was emotional about Communism. He was a heart guy—it's hard to imagine an Al Gore engaging in history that way."

Even those who would put the best face on the current situation have trouble maintaining their enthusiasm. The Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, pleased that both Gore and Bradley addressed his Rainbow/PUSH Coalition convention in August, reflected on their speeches several weeks later. "They're both very smart," Jackson said. He was sitting in his Chicago office, surrounded by photographs of his family and of Martin Luther King, Jr., and other inspirational leaders he has known—pictures that seemed to pulse with the memory of dramatic oratory. "Gore and Bradley each have a decent world view, and personal integrity, and real experience," Jackson said. Then he leaned back, closed his eyes, and sighed. "But sometimes, I guess, you have to rub two dry sticks together to start a fire."

The Vice-President had done an unusual thing at the Rainbow/PUSH convention. He'd gone into high-oratory mode, setting up a repeated, rhythmic refrain—"It's not supposed to be this way"—and he'd got the audience involved, saying the words along with him. "He had them up off the seats and cheering, Gore did," Jackson said with a knowing smile. As is too often the case with Gore, though, the device seemed just a bit too transparent and slightly condescending: grand, emotional, rhythmic oratory is something he trots out for black audiences. (Gore's lovely eulogy at his father's funeral, last December, was notable for its restraint.) By contrast, Bradley had delivered his usual laid-back, plainspoken stump speech to Jackson's group—a white boy playing within himself, just as he had on the basketball court. "He had a quiet demeanor," Jackson said. " 'Here's who I am,' he seemed to be saying. They weren't as excited as they were by Gore, but they were sitting up, waiting for the next word."

Jackson grew up with great oratory, of course—but, he said, he'd always been most impressed by the power of simplicity. "There's something about the sound of the genuine. You know it when you hear it. I remember once in South Carolina, way back when I was a kid, a singing group, the Five Blind Boys of Mississippi, came to our church. They had a tenor named Archie Brownlee with a really sweet voice. And before they sang that day Archie Brownlee said, 'This is my last tour through the South. And I hope you'll forgive me if there's a little liquor on my breath'—now this was in a church, and so there was some rustling in the pews—'but I'm not using it for pleasure. I have the cancer, and I need it to ease the pain. . . . But don't worry about me, because I'm going across the river. I hear there's a man on the other side who cures cancer, and can make the blind to see.' Well, the place just went crazy. The power of a simple truth."

I asked Jackson who was the first politician to move him that way. "Well, the politicians were all white—and we couldn't vote. When Kennedy was getting elected, in 1960, I was getting arrested for trying to integrate a library. But I do remember, some years later, I was coming out from the jail in Greenville and I heard Robert Kennedy's voice on the radio. He was talking about Birmingham. And I remember him saying, 'We will defeat segregation because we have the legal right and the moral right, and segregation is legally and morally wrong.' I'd never heard a white person say it so plainly, so powerfully. I've never forgotten it."

"IT'S the subjugated peoples who produce the best speakers," Pat Buchanan told me, sitting one hot August noon in an Iowa café, resting from his campaign labors. "It's the blacks, the Jews, the Irish . . . the rebels, people with a grievance. The more educated you are, the more well off, the more you speak in abstractions, from the intellect rather than from the heart."

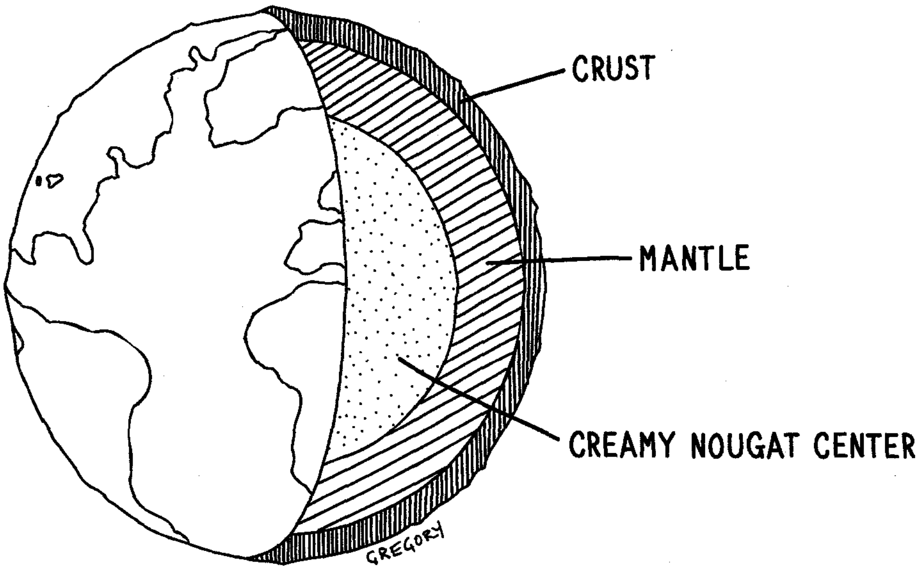
The relative absence of aggrievement at this placid moment in American history goes a long way toward explaining the current rhetorical lethargy. In a time of peace and prosperity, there are few things for politicians to get excited, or emotional, or eloquent about, even though most of them dream of being remembered as great orators.

Buchanan recalled that Richard Nixon, for whom he wrote speeches, was obsessed with the need to sound less abstract and more emotional. "I'd bring him a speech," Buchanan said, laughing, "and he'd throw it back at me and say, 'Go and study Billy Graham. Figure out what he does, and do the same thing for me!' Reagan, on the other hand, knew about the power of anecdote, telling stories, making things concrete. He'd tell these stories about World War II, about the tail gunner dying in a hail of bullets, and he'd have them crying—and of course it was all made up! He'd seen it in the movies. But people love that stuff."

As for himself, Buchanan said that some of his best moments as a campaigner came spontaneously and out of anger. "The 'peasants with pitchforks storming the castle' line happened spur of the moment at a rally in Nashua," he said. This was perhaps Buchanan's wildest populist flight of the 1996 campaign: the pitchfork-toters were his supporters storming the Republican Party's palace gates. "I'd been watching George Will and Sam Donaldson talking about me on television, and I was ticked off, so I just decided to cut loose."

With Buchanan's observations in mind, I decided to keep track of the anecdotes told by the Republicans speaking at the Iowa straw poll in Ames, on August 14th. It was a truly terrible evening of oratory—sterile, empty, depressing. The speeches seemed an afterthought to the hugger-mugger of bribing sufficient numbers of people to cast their votes. Only four of the nine candidates—and none of the top three finishers—told anecdotes. (The four were Orrin Hatch, Gary Bauer, Lamar Alexander, and Buchanan.) Buchanan, as always, gave the best performance, filled with jokes and stories. He roused the crowd with a hilarious assault on Bill Clinton, but—as is often the case with Pitchfork Pat—he never tried to move them to an emotion larger than disdain. "That's all he does," Mike Murphy, a Republican consultant, said afterward. "It's easy. He's lots of fun. Pat's like the opening act you bring in to warm up the crowd."

George W. Bush gave the worst



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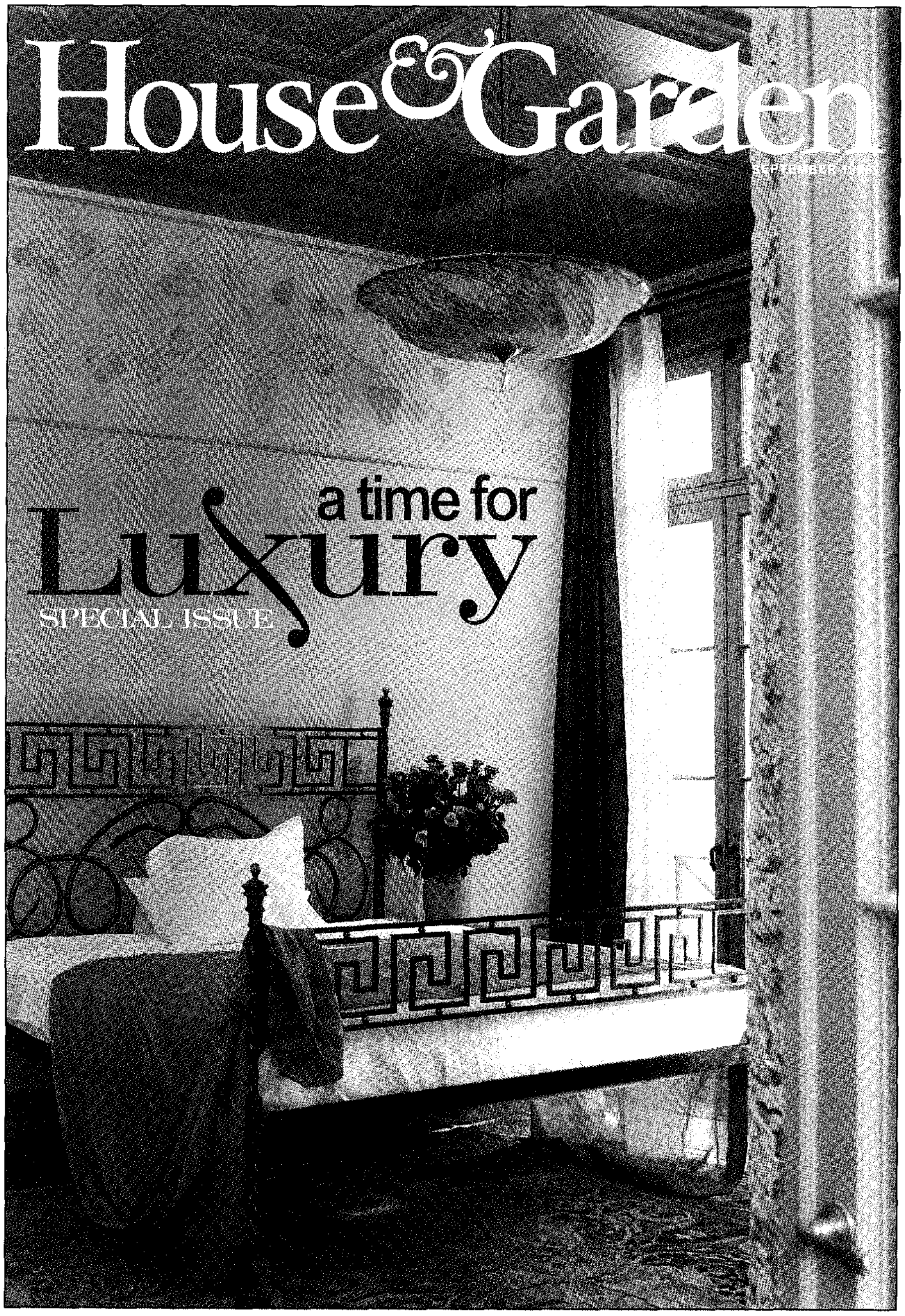

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speech of the evening—less enthusiastic than Elizabeth Dole's and less substantive than Steve Forbes's, although their efforts weren't very memorable, either. Bush read a series of platitudes from a text, and I realized, as he was speaking, that I hadn't heard him tell a single anecdote all year. "He doesn't like them," an aide explained later. "He thinks they're kind of phony."

"That sort of flat, declarative oratory is difficult even for the very best speakers," observed Peggy Noonan, who wrote the best and most personal speech ever delivered by Bush's father—the acceptance speech at the 1988 Republican Convention. In Bush the Younger's case, Noonan said, the absence of anecdote is particularly troublesome: it reinforces a perceived callowness. "It's not rich with signals that he's had an extensive human life experience."

JONAH'S FLIGHT TO TARSHISH

His mail, mostly bills, was already being forwarded
and each day his new landlady expected his arrival.
To welcome him, she had painted the spare room,
bought a bed and dresser, nothing exceptional—
a comfortable chair because, from what she heard,

he liked to read. As a widow with grown children
she looked forward to this respectable gentleman
with settled habits who might help about the house,
hammer the random nail, even carry the groceries,
and was it wrong to hope for a greater intimacy,

a companion to share her long evenings? Going out
each morning to sweep the walk, she'd gaze past
her gate toward the sea. Oh, the waves, the waves—
how they rush forward and retreat as if they've just
heard a story, which they have chosen not to repeat.

—Stephen Dobyns

In the week after the Ames straw poll, I switched from the Republicans to the Democrats, watching Al Gore and Bill Bradley as they traversed Iowa. Both addressed the state A.F.L.-C.I.O. convention in Waterloo—performances that did not trouble the ghost of John L. Lewis. Bradley was much as Jesse Jackson had described him: a charming, low-key speaker, working for acceptance rather than for transcendence. The best parts of his talk were autobiographical—he told some poignant stories about his parents and his small-town childhood, using simple words and a touch of knowing irony. (The most effective moments, however, were the most shameless: his overt efforts to pander to the union crowd.)

Al Gore was awful, even for Al Gore. He bounded onto the stage looking terrific in an olive short-sleeved knit shirt and khakis, to rousing cheers and chants of "We want Gore!" and then squandered the enthusiasm with his usual, endless stream of thank-yous. His speech began with perfunctory, partisan boilerplate and deteriorated into an annoying rant, as he repeated the phrase "risky ... Republican ... tax ... scheme"—referring to the eight-hundred-million-dollar tax cut proposed by the congressional Republicans—no fewer than ten times, in the slow, deeply patronizing, schoolmarmish manner that he often affects. If there's such a thing as a dispirited standing ovation, Gore received one at the end.

"I'd give Bradley a solid six on a one-to-ten scale," said Clara Oleson, of the University of Iowa Labor Center, who watched both speeches. "People liked him, but he lacked the sort of passion that connects with this sort of crowd. And Gore? A four and a half. Too disjointed. He wasn't specific on labor issues. Very disappointing."

Having winced through several days of Democratic rhetoric, I decided to consult Mario Cuomo, the former governor of New York, who made himself nationally famous as an orator with his keynote speech at the 1984 Convention. I asked him what he thought was missing. "They know what it takes to win," he said of the candidates. "That's what Bill Clinton did. That's what George Bush is doing. They are going from stone to stone across the morass. It is a politics designed to win through a cautious progression—and it's difficult to move people, to produce great rhetoric, in such a boring, unchallenging atmosphere. If the message is 'We're making progress, an inch at a time'—well, that's the sort of thing you whisper. It's not something you shout."

But might it be whispered more poetically? I asked.

"It's not the poetry. It's not the poetry. It's not the poetry!" Cuomo fairly shouted. "It's ideas! It's All Men Are Brothers—and that's not an option! It's *tikkun olam:* repair the universe! The truth is, there's important work to be done, and only government can do it. The cynics and demagogues who tell you, 'The era of big government is over,' they're lying to you! They're saying that because they just lost an election and they're scared."

Of course, "The era of big government is over" is probably the most memorable line uttered by the current President of the United States that doesn't involve a White House intern. And Bill Clinton presents something of a conundrum to academics who study rhetoric: he is the ultimate postmodern political practitioner, a fabulous communicator who almost never says anything memorable. "His State of the Union messages have been extremely strong," said Ted Sorensen, who was responsible for many of John Kennedy's best rhetorical moments. "Kennedy very rarely had applause like that when he delivered his State of the Union. He just read the address, listed his points. Clinton's the master of a practice we never thought of: the applause line."

But how does he do it? "I don't know. I don't know. He really is quite amazing," said Carol Gelderman, a professor of English at the University of New Orleans, who is the author of a recent book titled "All the Presidents' Words: The Bully Pulpit and the Creation of the Virtual Presidency." She added, "We don't get something like this very often—I don't think people appreciate how truly special Clinton is. I think his success is rooted in his knowledge of the policies.... He's deeply involved in the words he says. For important speeches, he goes over every single line."

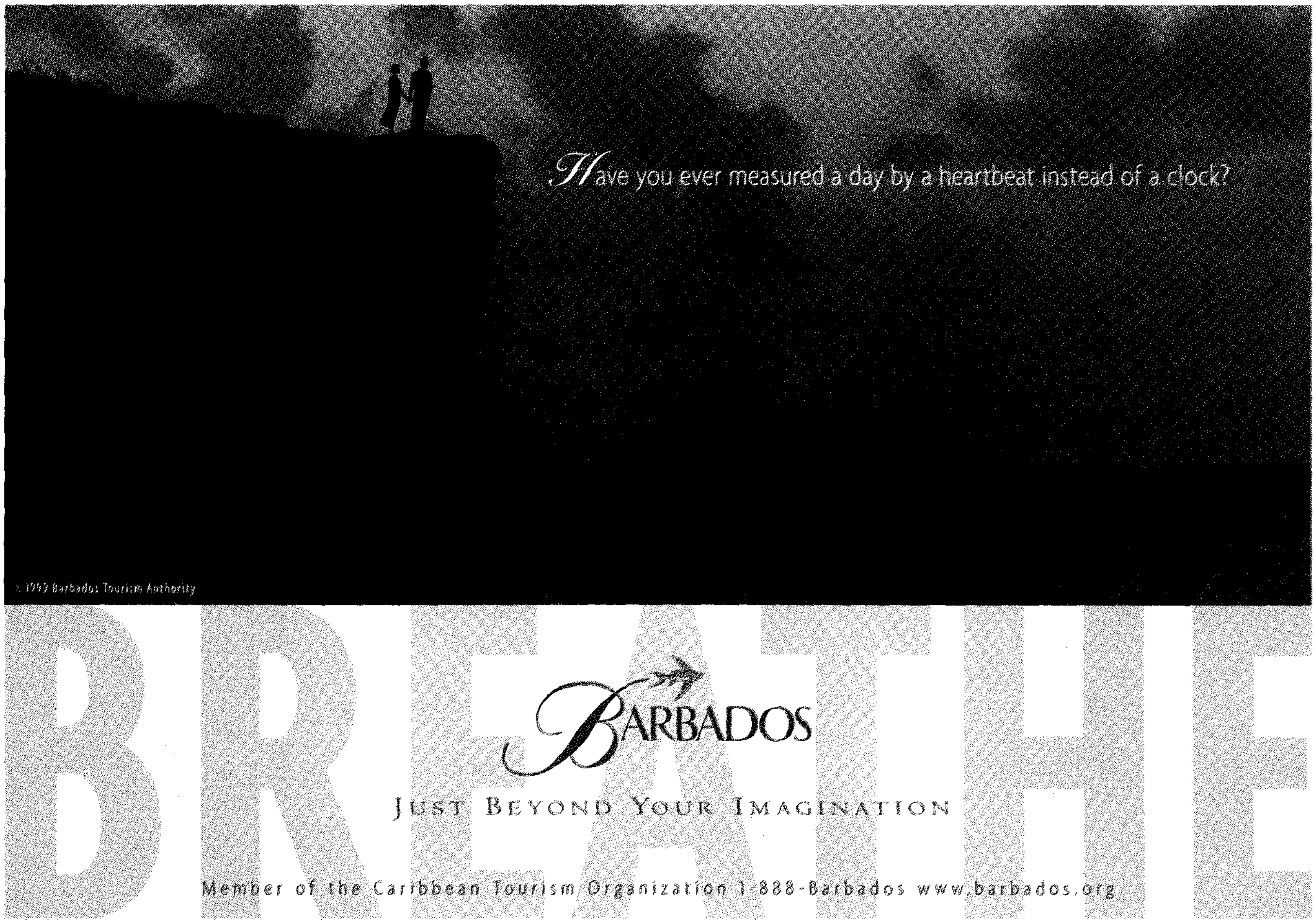
Gelderman's thesis is that Presidential rhetoric began to wane when policy aides—like Franklin Roosevelt's Sam Rosenman, Kennedy's Sorensen, and Lyndon Johnson's Harry McPherson—stopped writing speeches and the task was turned over to professional speechwriters. "When the job moved from the west wing of the White House to the Old Executive Office Building, the rhetoric declined," Gelderman said. "Clinton, who is his own best policy aide, is a throwback to the days when Presidents wrote their speeches themselves."

In some ways, though, the content of Bill Clinton's speeches seems the least important thing about them. His true eloquence is physical, the body language he can deploy at crucial moments. The two steps he took toward a black woman questioner who was concerned about the economy, during the second Presidential debate in 1992, may have been the most important "statement" he made during that campaign (especially when contrasted with the detachment of George Bush, who was caught by the television cameras that same evening checking his watch). "Clinton seems to reach right into your heart," Larry J. Sabato, a political-science professor at the University of Virginia, said. "He pierces you with his eyes. He knows your emotions. He cares about you. Personally. It may be totally phony, or it may not, but he really seems to love you. It may be the rhetorical equivalent of cotton candy, but it works."

LISTENING to great oratory produces a visceral, almost primal, satisfaction, just as listening to great music does. Ever since Darwin proposed that music preceded speech in human development, anthropologists have been stewing about the relationship between the two—but almost everyone agrees that music's evolutionary function was political. It brought people together.

In "Keeping Together in Time," a 1995 history of military drill, William McNeill located the roots of the drill in prehistoric hunting dances: those who danced and then hunted together on the African savanna were more likely to survive and procreate than those who went hunting alone. "Human beings desperately need to belong to communities that give guidance and meaning to their lives," McNeill wrote, "and moving rhythmically while giving voice together is the surest, most speedy, and efficacious way of creating and sustaining such communities that our species has ever hit upon.... [K]eeping together in time arouses warm emotions of collective solidarity and erases personal frustrations as words, by themselves, cannot do."

But words delivered rhythmically and dramatically can be nearly as mesmerizing as the "muscular bonding" of dance and drill. "And words delivered rhythmically and dramatically, accompanied by a simple repetitive gesture, can be pretty powerful," McNeill told me, rather puckishly, by phone, from his Connecticut home a few weeks ago. "A simple ges-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ture like a repeated salute—*Sieg heil,* for example.”

The old Hitlerian stand-up-and-rant model seems impossible today: it would seem too hot, too unironic, too ugly for television. Postmodern demagogues—like the surgically altered Klansman David Duke—are bland, cool, and indirect. Old-fashioned tub-thumpers like Jesse Jackson tend to be more effective in person, in a large room, than imprisoned in a television screen. Jackson often sweats when he speaks; public sweating has been disastrous since the first beads appeared on Richard Nixon's upper lip during his debate with John Kennedy in 1960.

Modern politicians are wary—wary to a fault—about rousing strong emotions when they speak. Emotions are unpredictable: the speaker is as likely to get carried away as those being spoken to. Enemies may be made. “You can't really move people without a certain spontaneity,” Pat Buchanan said. “And consultants hate spontaneity.”

It is also difficult to move people—very deeply or very far—in a thirty-second paid advertisement or in a ten-second sound bite, but that is how politicians are most often perceived by the non-C-SPAN-watching public. Romance and meaning are conveyed visually rather than verbally: Gary Hart tossing an axe during the 1984 campaign, Bill Clinton associating himself with small-town America on his bus tours in 1992, Ronald Reagan always surrounded by American flags.

Actual public eloquence has become a less than essential quality for elected officials, and an even lower priority during the electoral process. “Can you imagine sending Lincoln out with the Gettysburg Address in this atmosphere?” mused Mike Murphy, an informal adviser to the eminently—and refreshingly—unadvisable John McCain in the Presidential campaign. “What sound bite would you get on the evening news? It's unimaginable. And whatever you got, it would be immediately subsumed by some blowhard reporter saying, ‘Lincoln campaign insiders said the speech was an attempt to win support from veterans' groups and a test of a new, shorter speaking format.’ Why should any politician even try for eloquence in those sorts of circumstances?”

Why? Because there is a deep public longing, and a societal need, for a leader who can unite and rouse and soothe and heal. “It's not the rhetoric of despair, it's the rhetoric of optimism,” said Robert Shrum, who has written speeches for Ted Kennedy and other liberal Democrats over the years and recently signed on as a media consultant with the Gore campaign. “It's Franklin Roosevelt speaking calmly and with utter confidence about our ‘inevitable triumph’ when half the fleet was at the bottom of the ocean. It doesn't involve podium pounding. Reagan practically never raised his voice. The only time I remember him shouting was when he said, ‘Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!’ And then it was absolutely appropriate to the occasion. But there's always a lyricism, a musicality to it. The exception was Truman, I think. He never sang, but goddamnit his offkeyness touched people. For example, in the midst of his acceptance speech at the 1948 Convention, as he's challenging the ‘do nothing’ Republican Congress, he says that he's going to call them back to Washington on ‘the twenty-sixth day of July, which out in Missouri we call Turnip Day.’ Turnip Day!”

Truman has become something of a heartland cliché, of course—the plain-speaking little guy, unappreciated in his time, who made all the right strategic moves at a crucial moment in American history. His memory has been summoned too often by politicians who would like us to believe they are speaking plainly, but who never quite have the courage to measure up to Truman's clunky candor. At a moment, though, when politics seems little more than a distant cloud darkening the sunniest of American days, and in a time when political messages are measured in seconds rather than in sentences, Truman's percussive atonality may be the best we can hope for. But that requires the sort of speech that modern politicians aren't used to—words that haven't been market-tested or focus-grouped, words that are slightly off, inconvenient, perhaps even a bit eccentric, words that rush spontaneously from the speaker before they can be filtered through a platoon of consultants. As Jesse Jackson said, there's an invigorating quality to simple truth simply spoken. We'll know it—immediately—if we ever hear it again. ♦

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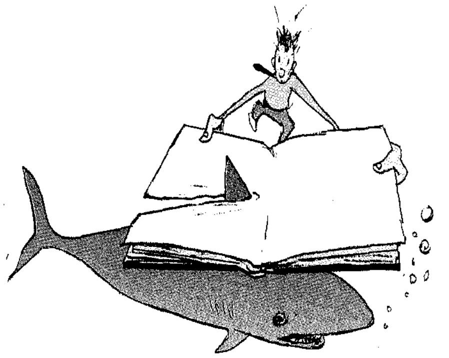
REVIEWS IN BRIEF: FALL DISASTER BOOKS

BY CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY



INTO FINNAIR

by Barko Bakkiilo (Debacle Books; $21.00)

The author, a Helsinki parking-lot attendant, had long dreamed of becoming the first one-legged Finn to attempt the summit of Mt. Everest. He had planned to wear his artificial leg, but after a one-legged Swede summitted Everest in 1997 Bakkiilo decided to hop to the top. Caught in an ice storm that lasted two months, he ran out of food and had to eat his remaining leg, which, he observes, "tasted like chicken." He made it to the summit, becoming the first no-legged Finn to conquer the world's most challenging mountain, a remarkable, if unnecessary, achievement.

AGAINST ALL CODS

by Asa Blurd (Calamity Press; $19.95)

Blurd, the captain of the Anna K., a Georges Bank cod trawler, is the latest to reveal that he, too, was out in the horrendous hurricane-cum-gale memorably described by Sebastian Junger in "The Perfect Storm." Exciting as his account is, Captain Blurd's book seems a bit derivative. His opening line, "Call me Asa," will strike some as a presumptuous welcome-aboard to an American sea story. And Captain Blurd's cod boat bears an uncanny resemblance to the swordfishing vessels described by Mr. Junger, best-selling memoirist Linda Greenlaw, and the twenty-one other swordfish-boat-skippers-turned-authors who braved the crowded and stormy waters that fateful October.

THE STUPIDEST JOURNEY IN THE WORLD: DRAGGING A SWORDFISH BOAT UP MT. EVEREST BY DOGSLED

by Bryce McCall (Ordeal Books; $50)

It will surprise no one that the late Oates (Fruity) Blaisdell IV's attempt to be the first to accomplish this exotic combination of feats did not end in success. The twelve hundred Sherpas he hired to "assist" the dogsled teams balked when they saw the boat—not because of its daunting size but because, as it turns out, Sherpa religion specifically forbids hauling New England swordfish boats up "The Mother of All Mountains." The venture ended well short of the summit—three yards from base camp, actually, when the boat sank up to the gunwales in Nepalese mud. Mr. Blaisdell's insistence on using five hundred kilos of gelignite to dislodge his vessel was perhaps the last in a series of injudicious impulses.

THE PERFECT NUISANCE

by Greg Zorthian (Catastrophe House; $21)

This is the first in a projected deluge of "quickie" books about the Hurricane Floyd-related downpour that temporarily shut down rail service to Manhattan ("The Flooding of Track 28," "The 5:07 to Stamford Is Delayed," and "Do You Know How Much These Shoes Cost?"). "As we entered our second hour of being stopped on the track," the author, a mid-level Web-site manager, writes, "I studied the faces of my fellow-passengers. Who would be the first to snap? Who the first to succumb to the howling forces of nature that had brought us to this desolate part of Pelham?" He didn't have to wonder long. A man two seats away "went postal" when the battery on his cell phone gave out. A heavyset passenger had to sit on the man until the train finally pulled into Grand Central. But the ordeal was far from over. The author describes tiptoeing through puddles "the size of Lake Erie"; a taxi line that stretched "as far as the eye could see, or at least to Forty-sixth Street"; and the marble floor of the Yale Club, where he sought refuge, "slick with water, as if God Himself had whizzed all over it." Perhaps it goes to show that there's no drama like everyday life. Or perhaps not. ♦

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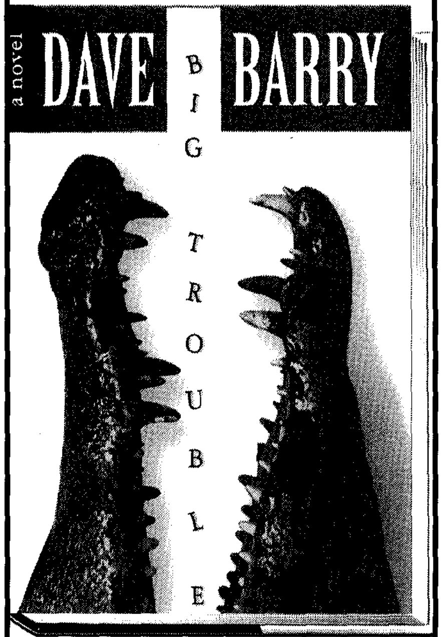

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THE CONTROL OF NATURE

FAREWELL TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The breaching of Edwards Dam.

BY JOHN McPHEE

In the view of conservationists, there is something special about dams, something—as conservation problems go—that is disproportionately and metaphysically sinister. The outermost circle of the Devil's world seems to be a moat filled mainly with DDT. Next to it is a moat of burning gasoline. Within that is a ring of pinheads each covered with a million people—and so on past phalanxed bulldozers and bicuspid chain saws into the absolute epicenter of Hell on earth, where stands a dam. The implications of the dam exceed its true level in the scale of environmental catastrophes. Conservationists who can hold themselves in reasonable check before new oil spills and fresh megalopolises mysteriously go insane at even the thought of a dam. The conservation movement is a mystical and religious force, and possibly the reaction to dams is so violent because rivers are the ultimate metaphors of existence, and dams destroy rivers. Humiliating nature, a dam is evil—placed and solid.—*"Encounters with the Archdruid," The New Yorker, April 3, 1971.*

WITH John McPhedran, I carried a canoe around a ballfield in Waterville, Maine, and on into woods. The terrain fell away there sharply. The boat was heavy but its skin was indestructible, and we dragged it, bumping on roots. So much for the loving care reserved for canvas, bark, and kevlar canoes. This one had no need of it. Its makers promote its type with pictures that show one being thrown off the roof of their factory in Old Town. So we twitched it downhill like a log. On the threshold of the year 2000, this was just one of the countless ways of saying farewell to the nineteenth century.

A few days earlier, we would not have had to choose a model so tough. We put it into Messalonskee Stream, which carried us into the Kennebec River, which, in this stretch, had suddenly lost about five million tons of water as a result of deliberate demolition. Fifteen miles downstream, in Augusta, a dam two stories high and more than nine hundred feet wide had been breached on the first of July.

There were rapids at the mouth of Messalonskee Stream, but they had been there in pre-Columbian time. Just above the dam's impoundment, they suggested what its depth had concealed. A blue heron tried to lead us through the rapids, or seemed to, in a series of short, nosy flights down the left bank. A kingfisher watched. The Augusta Water Power Company blocked the river in the year that Martin Van Buren replaced Andrew Jackson as President of the United States. It was the year of the Panic of 1837, when real estate collapsed, banks failed like duckpins, and homeless people died in the streets. The first steam railroad was nine years old. Oberlin, the first coeducational American college, was four years old. If you could afford Buffaloe's Oil, you used it in your hair to fight baldness. In Augusta, primarily thanks to the new dam, some people could afford Buffaloe's Oil. The dam powered seven sawmills, a gristmill, and a machine shop. Incidentally, it had a fish ladder.

Beside the second rip we came to was a sofa bed, its skirts showing the stains of fallen water. We expected more of the same. We expected grocery carts. This, after all, was not Township 13, Range 11, of the North Woods, where nearly half the State of Maine consists of nameless unorganized townships. This was settled, supermarket Maine, but in the fifteen river miles upstream of Augusta we would see one beer can, no grocery carts, and three tires. Now we saw a mallard, a pewee, goldfinches. We heard song sparrows, a wood thrush, a veery. I wouldn't know a veery from a blue-winged warbler, but John McPhedran is acute on birds. I've known him since he was seventeen, seventeen years ago. Since then, he has become a botanist, a general field naturalist, and a freelance water-quality consultant who works for the Maine Department of Transportation. We saw sticking up from a large and newly emergent river boulder an iron bolt fully an

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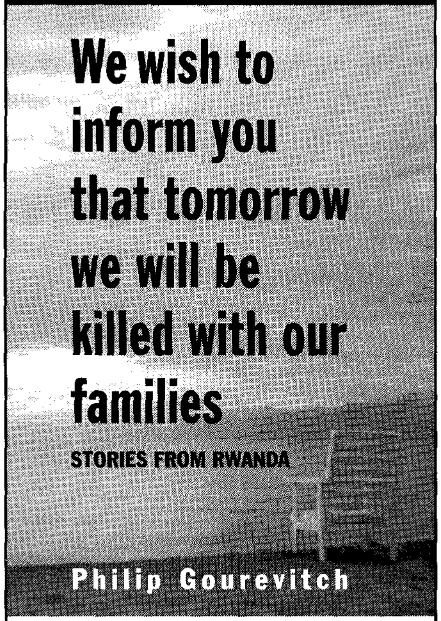
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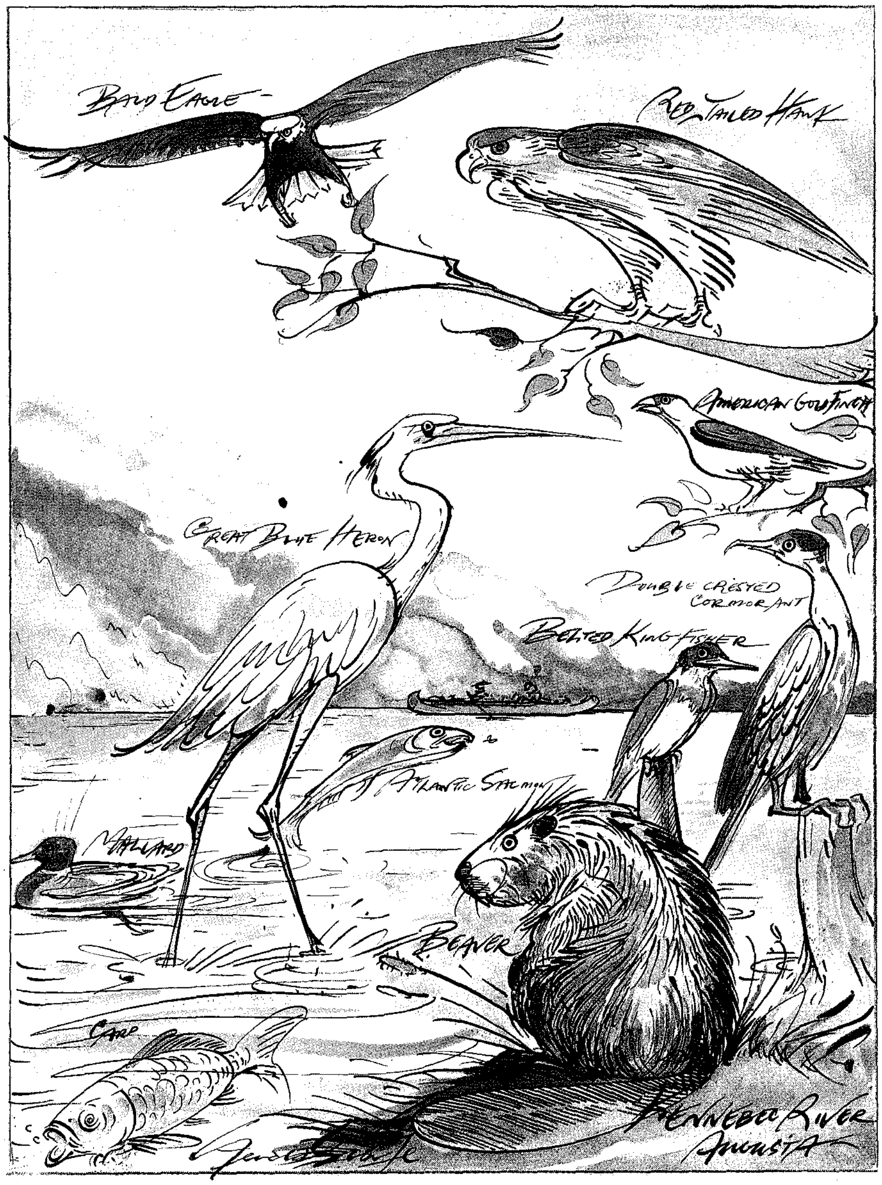
inch and a half in diameter and capped with a head like a big iron mushroom. I knew what that dated from—the log drives of the Kennebec, which began in Colonial times and came to an end in 1976. Put a chain around that bolt and you could stop a raft of logs.

We saw no white pines, very long gone as the masts of ships. Or spruce, for that matter. We saw deciduous trees. In fall, the river's walls would be afire in oranges and reds, but now, in summer, the leaves seemed too bright, too light for Maine. Among them were few houses—in fifteen otherwise uncivilized miles, a total of three nervous houses peeping through narrow slots in the trees. This seemed to report a population that had turned its back on the river, which it had, for the better part of a century, because the river was cluttered with the debris of log drives, becessed with community waste, spiked with industrial toxins. Square-rigged ships once came up into the fresh Kennebec to carry its pure ice down the east coasts of both Americas and around Cape Horn to San Francisco, and even across the Pacific, but by the nineteen-forties and fifties the Kennebec had developed such a chronic reek that windows in unairconditioned offices in the Capitol of Maine—six hundred yards from the river—were kept tight shut in summer. After the Clean Water Act, of 1972, the Kennebec, like so many American rivers, steadily and enduringly cleared, and the scene was set for the dam destruction of 1999 and the restoration of this part of the river.



"You're going to look back in years hence and say, 'It all began right here on this riverbank.'"

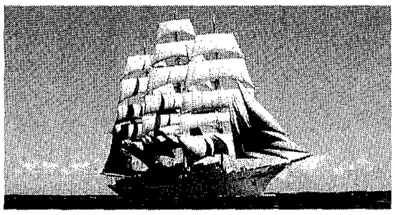
GERALD SCARFE

We looked down through clear water, color of pale tea, at a variously rocky and gravelly bottom. In Maritime Canada, I had recently fished over a scene like that in a place locally known as the Shad Bar. Shad like to spawn over that kind of riverbed. In this river, 1837 was not a good year for anadromous fish. Something like a million American shad came up the Kennebec before the dam at Augusta stopped them. Immemorially, the Kennebecs themselves speared Atlantic salmon below falls upriver. The fish ladder at the Augusta dam may have helped to some extent, but it disappeared in a flood in 1838, not to be replaced.

We saw and heard three crows charily screaming at a red-tailed hawk—a sedentary drama enacted in a dying tree. A spotted sandpiper watched as well, from a newly dried rock in the fallen stream. Like a scale model of the Yukon River, the Kennebec was unfolding before us not in multiple twists and turns but in sizable segments, long reaches—a bend, a mile here, another bend, two miles there. They quickly added up to Six-Mile Falls, a rapid that was covered over by the rising impoundment in 1837, and until just a few days ago had been an engulfed series of bedrock ledges under the stillwater pool. In 1826, the United States Engineer Department surveyed the Kennebec River and mapped Six-Mile Falls, so named because they were six miles downstream from Ticonic Falls, at Waterville. The engineers' report (1828) would preserve that name, if nothing else, while the surf-like sound and the roil of white water were taken away for a hundred and sixty-two years. Six-Mile Falls, the Army engineers reported, were "three ledges of rock forming three distinct pitches." Downriver, we heard them now—that sound of gravel pouring on a tin drum. You don't need Sockdolager, the Upset Rapid, or Snake River Canyon to pick you up with that sound. Any riffle, let alone a small rapid, will do. I can feel adrenaline when I fill a glass of water.

Six-Mile Falls was a white riverscape of rock and plunge pools, small souse holes, tightly coiled eddies, and noisy,

SEA CLOUD



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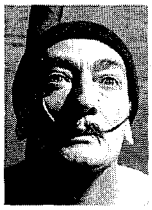
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staired cascades. As we approached, we had to stand up and look for the thread of the river. The place was making scenery lifted from the dead. For six, seven, eight generations, it had been as withdrawn from the world as Debussy's *cathédrale engloutie*, but now, as in the time long gone, it was making its own music. Its higher rock, in broad, flat segments, was covered with filamentous algae, which under water has the look of long grass, combed straight by current. This algae was in thick brown mats, opened to the sky by the breaching of the dam and on their way to removal by the wind. We picked what seemed to be the most promising chute. The canoe slipped through it. We spun around and hung in an eddy. From riverbank to riverbank, water was falling in a hundred different ways. The truly moving fact that this scene, now restored, had been occluded for so much historic time was in an instant wiped from my mind by an even more stirring thought. Migrating fish "bag up" at the base of any rapid. You could be here during the spring migration and catch the milling shad.

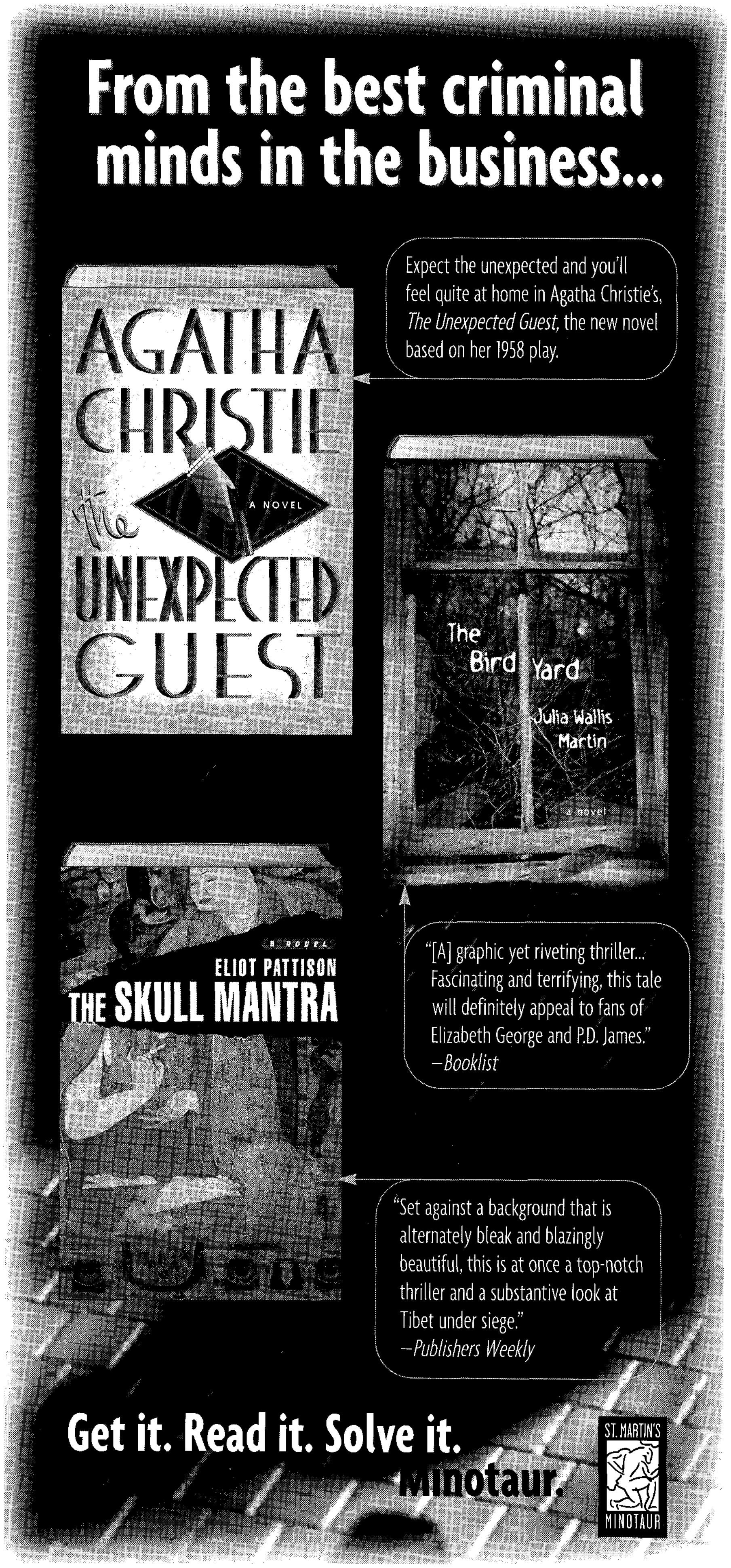
From the bateaux of Colonel Benedict Arnold, coming up the Kennebec River, these impeding ledges of rock would have looked about as they again do now, and the bateaux surely had no choice but to bag up here, too. There were two hundred and twenty of them, newly made of green and shrinking pine, and eleven hundred Revolutionary soldiers, some in the bateaux, some on foot along the banks, collecting at places like Six-Mile Falls to portage the boats or haul them up the rapids. Local farmers came, with oxen, to help. Passing through here in September, 1775, Arnold's was the inspiring expedition that attempted to capture Quebec, meanwhile encountering so much cold, swamp, snow, and hunger that the soldiers—who included Henry Dearborn, of New Hampshire; Daniel Morgan, of Virginia; Aaron Burr, of New Jersey—boiled their own moccasins for soup.

Thirteen years before the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, the first English settlement on the Kennebec River was established. Flowing straight south from what would become known as Moosehead Lake, the Kennebec was the central thoroughfare of Maine. When the Plymouth Colony was eight years old (1628), Plymouth set up its own trading post on the Kennebec—forty miles inland from the ocean, at a place known to the Kennebecs as Cushnoc. According to the Abenakis, of whom the Kennebecs were a band, *cushnoc* meant "head of tide" or "where the tide stops." The tide stopped at a rapids squeezed by Cushnoc Island. Ocean ships were stopped there, too. Traders continued upriver in smaller boats. This moment in any major river—the site of the first rapids above the sea—is known universally as the fall line and is an obvious place for a city. Richmond, Washington, Trenton, Troy, and Montreal grew at the fall line of rivers. Fort Western was built on the fall line of the Kennebec—on the left bank, close to Cushnoc Island—in 1754. As early as 1785, settlers there were speaking of the island, the rapids, the ledges, the gravels as a suitable site for a dam, and in 1797 the island, the fort, the native village, and the white settlement became the Township of Augusta in the Massachusetts district of Maine. In red brick and white clapboard, among state buildings of Maine granite, Augusta is still a town—larger than Montpelier, smaller than Juneau.

At about 6 A.M. on July 1, 1999, the first of more than a thousand spectators began to collect above the eastern end of the Augusta dam, in a place known locally as the Tree-Free Parking Lot. Tree-Free Fiber is a bankrupt company that recycled paper. The view was immediate, across three hundred yards of barrage—called Edwards Dam since the eighteen-eighties, when the Edwards Manufacturing Company bought it and was soon operating a hundred thousand spindles and employing a thousand people in one of the largest cotton mills in the world. The dam was veiled now in falling water, an exception being a gap at the west end, where sixty feet had been dismantled and removed. A curvilinear cofferdam, convex to the current of the river, ran like a short causeway from the west shore to the broken end of the dam, cupping the wound and holding back the river.

The crowd gathered in suits, ties, and combat fatigues, sandals, sneakers, boots, and backpacks—babies in the backpacks. There were port-a-potties, T-shirts for sale, booths of brochures—Trout Unlimited, American Rivers, Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services. There was a row of television cameras. A helicopter preëmpted the sound of the river. With "Muddy Water" and "River" and a banjo and a guitar and a pennywhistle, a trio called Schooner Fare tried to compete. Two fixed-wing planes, one of them on floats, flew in circles even tighter than the chopper's. The people had come to hear the Secretary of the Interior, the Governor of Maine, and the Mayor of Augusta—but mainly to witness the freeing of the Kennebec, the breaching of the dam.

To dam-allergic conservationists, the idea is insufficiently satisfying that hydroelectric-power turbines spare the atmosphere by reducing the burning of fuels. During the energy crisis of 1973 and thereabout, the conservationists kept this viewpoint somewhat muffled while small-scale hydroelectric enterprises blossomed by the hundreds at small existing dams and helped meet a national need. By 1986, though, long lines at gas stations were in long-term memory and the environmental movement made a literal breakthrough on dams. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which had before then been instructed to promote unequivocally the development of hydroelectric dams, was now instructed, by an amended Federal Power Act, to give "equal consideration" to wildlife, recreation, environmental quality, and related factors when renewing licenses or granting new ones. At Edwards Dam, in Augusta, Maine, for example, ocean fish coming upriver to spawn—such as Atlantic sturgeon, Atlantic salmon, and American shad—had received essentially no consideration for sixteen decades: they could not get past the fall line to their historical birthing grounds above the dam. Disturbed by the plight of American shad in another New England river, in 1849, Henry David Thoreau described them "patiently, almost pathetically, with instinct not to be discouraged, not to be *reasoned* with, revisiting their old haunts, as if their stern fates would relent, and still met by the



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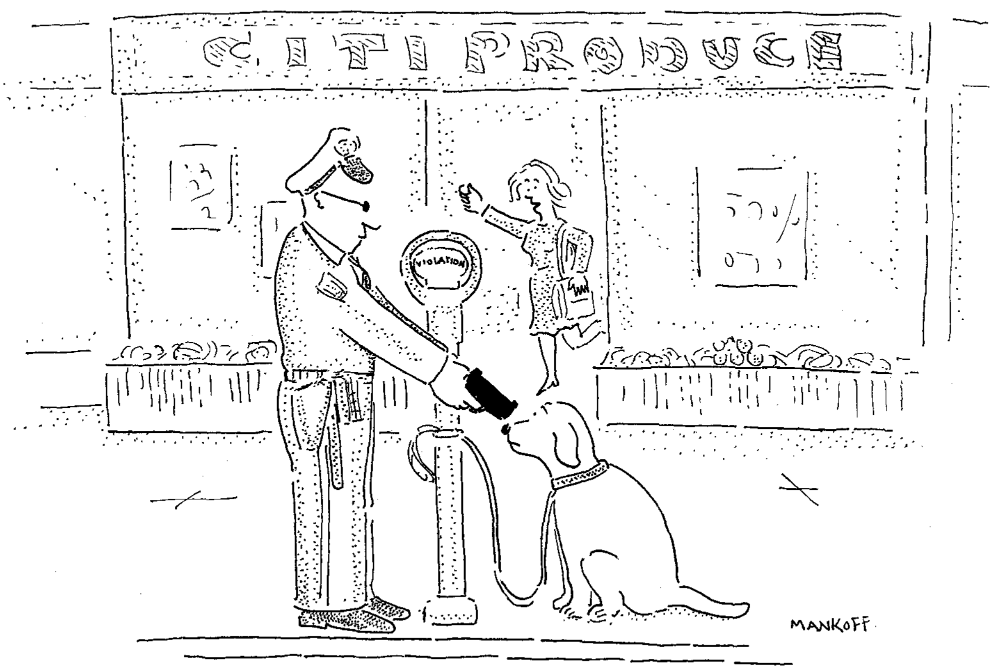


"Wait! I've got a quarter!"

• •

Corporation with its dam. Poor shad! where is thy redress? When Nature gave thee instinct, gave she thee the heart to bear thy fate?" Thoreau would have been thrilled to know that the answer to his questions would one day be handed down by a federal agency called FERC.

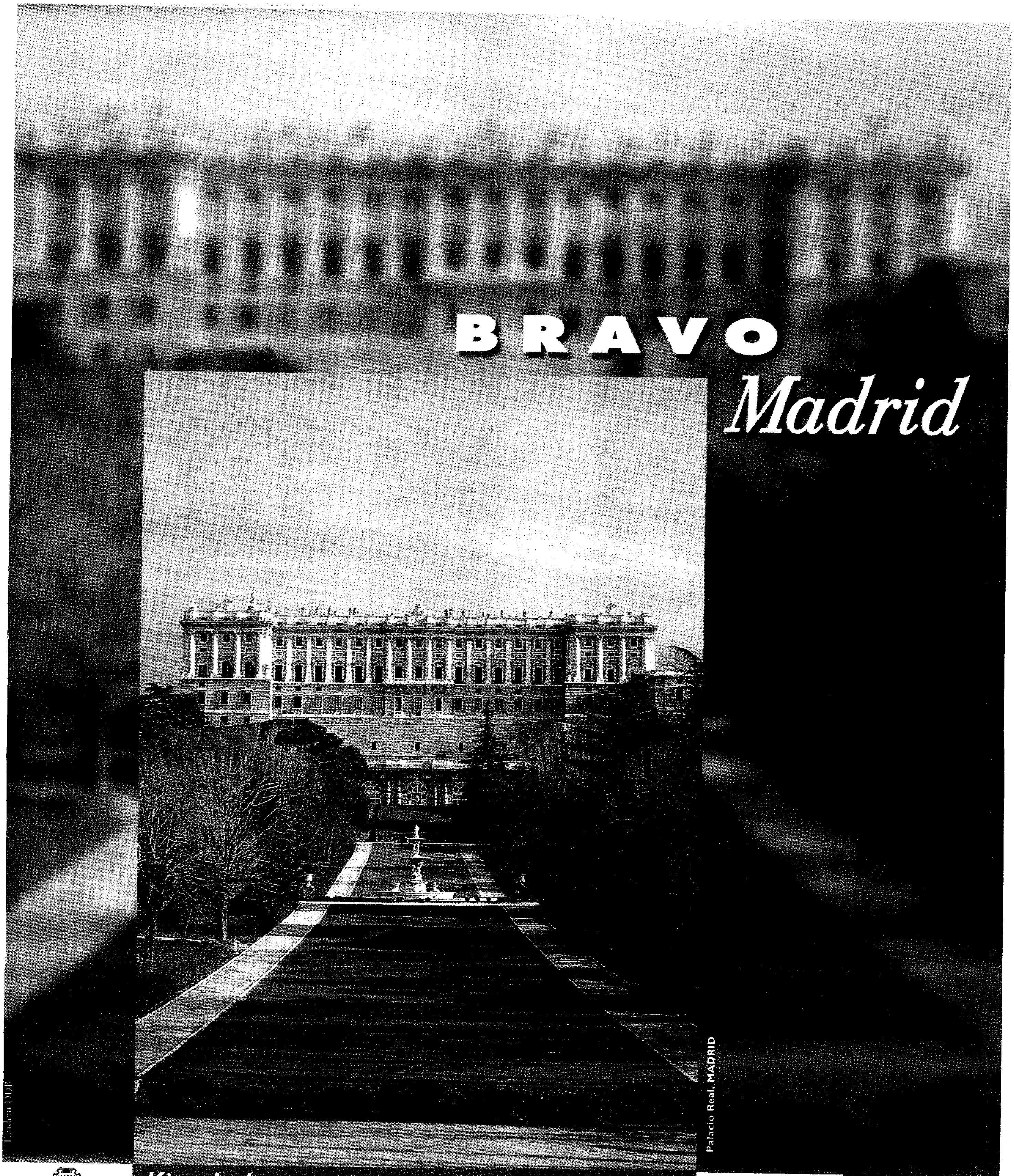
Prodded by activists' lawyers, the commission soon developed what amounted to a retroactive statement of environmental impact. Edwards Dam had been making electricity since 1913—lately, 3.5 megawatts, scarcely enough to light the warehouse at L.L. Bean. The license was up for renewal. Since "needed and appropriate" fishways would cost three times as much as removing the dam—and the power it produced was hardly a redeeming factor—the commission ordered the Edwards Manufacturing Company to shut down its turbines, deconstruct the dam, and restore to a natural, free-flowing state the public waterway the company had used for profit.

This was the first big dam in a major river to be ordered out of existence by the federal government while the owner was left holding a wet application. In a national way, the Tree-Free Parking Lot was full of people who hoped for more, manifestly including Rebecca Wodder and Margaret Bowman, of American Rivers, who would afterward raise glasses of champagne in celebration of "the new era of dam removal"; Amos Eno, of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation; Todd Ambs, of the River Alliance of Wisconsin; Mike Lopushinsky, of New York Rivers United; and—from Arizona—Pam Hyde, of Glen Canyon Institute, dedicated to the removal of Glen Canyon Dam from the Colorado River. They sat on folding chairs as if on a ship's deck for a formal surrender. For the victors, this was Yorktown, Cornwallis sulking in his tent. It was not a great moment for the National Hydropower Association, despite its reminders that eleven per cent of the national energy pool keeps three hundred and thirty-five million tons of carbon dioxide out of the air. It was not a great moment for wistful Augustans, lining the riverbank, who remembered the water-powered mills that had nurtured their town. Dieter Bradbury, of the Portland *Press Herald*, later wrote that he had seen "part of Augusta's rich industrial heritage slowly drain into the Atlantic."

To some environmentalists, hydropower seemed cleaner than the ultimate deal by which the cost of removal was effected. The owner's way out was to give the dam to the State of Maine. The state's way out was a many-back scratcher in which the Bath Iron Works, thirty miles down the Kennebec, and a consortium of hydropower stations up the Kennebec jointly provided more than seven million dollars—or enough to eradicate the dam with four million left over for restoration programs involving fish.

Bath Iron Works. If the Kennebec was historically rich in salmon, sturgeon, and shad, it was no less so in ships. The first was built in 1607. In the forty miles of the tidal river, thousands followed. The Hesperus, wrecked multiguously by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, was built in Pittston, on the freshwater Kennebec. Bath was once the fourth-largest seaport in the United States. The Bath Iron Works carried the tradition from the age of sail into the age of steel, and continues to build destroyers for the United States Navy. Exasperated with the inefficiencies of building new hulls on inclined ground, the shipyard desired to fill in seventeen acres of the Kennebec and build new drydocks. With the concurrence of the State of Maine and the Kennebec Coalition of environmental groups, the Iron Works contributed two and a half million to the razing of Edwards Dam, and, unopposed by environmentalists, will build the drydocks. The Kennebec Hydro Developers Group added nearly five million to help see Edwards gone. Their reward will be postponements of up to fifteen years in the requirement to install fish passages at their dams. Jonathan Carter, who once was a Green Party candidate for governor of Maine and is now the executive director of the Forest Ecology Network, told the Kennebec *Journal*, "By following the money trail and the inside dealing, the hoopla becomes clouded by sellouts, buyouts, and trade-offs, which set very dangerous precedents."

Maine's first governor (1820) was William King, a Kennebec shipbuilder, and also farmer, miller, sawyer, storekeeper, banker. A French traveller mistook him for an authentic king (according to the Kennebec poet Robert P. Tristram Coffin). In any case, King was known for being "as independent as a hog on ice." This set of facts seemed to cluster about Maine's current governor—the Independent Angus King—as he rose to speak in the Tree-Free Parking Lot. He had tousled hair. He had a



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sandy mustache, medical in nature, and he wore a red and gold tie covered with blue fish. Having secured seven million dollars for the cause, he now lifted things to a loftier stratum than the lubricated trade-offs in his Kennebec River Comprehensive Hydropower Settlement Accord. Speaking without notes, he mentioned POP. He defined POP. He described the promise of its cybertronic effects in connecting entire communities to the World Wide Web, and he said that POP would be to the twenty-first century what the community dam had been to the nineteenth. It was time for the dam to go.

A year earlier, a short way downstream on the same riverbank, Bruce Babbitt, the Secretary of the Interior, had said, "This is not a call to remove all, most, or even many dams. But this is a challenge to dam owners and operators to defend themselves, to demonstrate by hard facts, not by sentiment or myth, that the continued operation of a dam is in the public interest, economically and environmentally." In the months that followed, the ancestral truism "As Maine goes, so goes the nation" was frequently invoked by people proclaiming a new national momentum in sentiment toward removal of dams. And now, in an open-collar faded-brick Madras shirt, Bruce Babbitt looked across the crowd before him and counted the television cameras. He remarked on the considerable number of reporters, who had travelled from cities in four time zones. "They're not coming just to celebrate good news," he said. "I'm here to tell you, that's not what the American press is about. Reporters are here because they know this is the beginning of something that is going to affect the entire nation. It's a manifestation of who we are: neighbors living in a democracy. Before the Clean Water Act of 1972, the river was so polluted that it turned buildings black and literally peeled the paint off the walls. For healthy rivers and fisheries, the removal sets an important precedent. You're going to look back in years hence and say, 'It all began right here on this riverbank.' " Later in the day, Babbitt waxed almost Biblical, adding, "It's about coming together to restore the waters, recognizing that the rivers in turn have the power to restore our communities."

PUBLIC SCHOOL 157
B. Smaller

"O.K., here I am in the fourth grade, but is that really what I want to be doing with my life?"

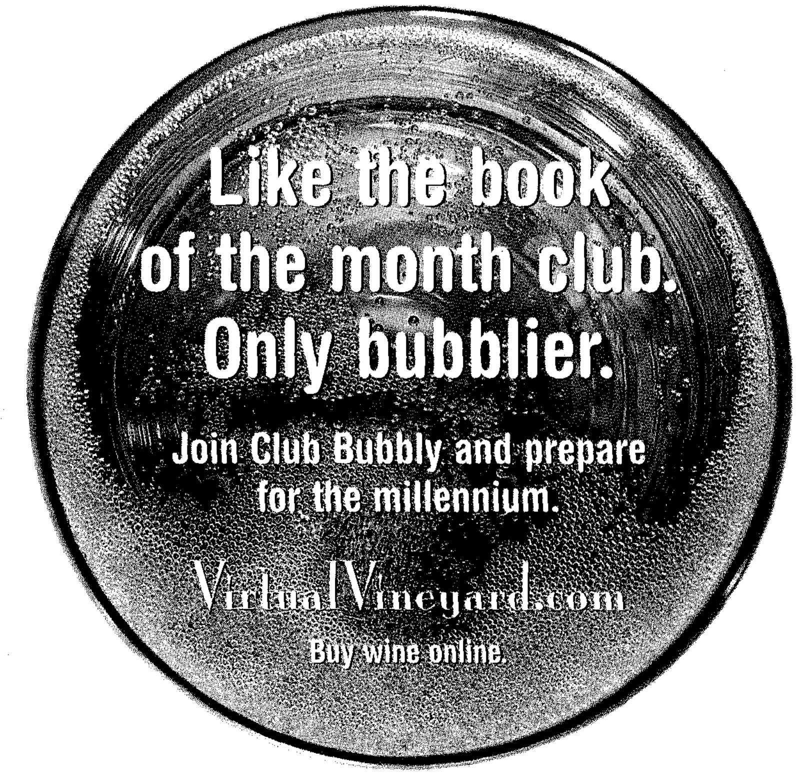
Begging his pardon, but from where I was sitting it all seemed to be about fish. Another speaker—among ten or so before and after King and Babbitt—spoke with reverence of a deceased state legislator who had helped lead the cause against the dam: "Wherever he is, I hope he's hooked to an Atlantic salmon on a fly rod somewhere," said the speaker, as if the purpose of destroying the dam was not so much to benefit as to barb fish. An economic study that might have been carried forward by a day trader had determined that forty-eight million dollars would be brought to the river by sport fishermen soon after the dam was gone. In the eighteenth century, Kennebec salmon were so abundant that farmers hiring help typically had to promise not to feed them salmon more than once a day. And now the eighteenth century—POP!—was coming back to the river.

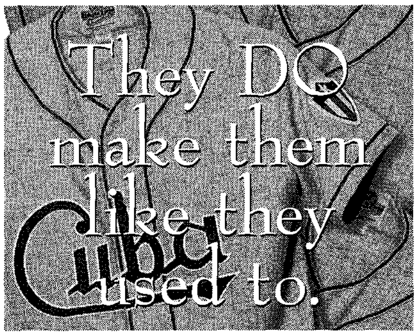
Lewis Flagg, who was in the crowd, had told me that he expected as many as seven hundred and twenty-five thousand shad to be spawning north of Augusta in fifteen years or so. Flagg was the director of the Stock Enhancement Division of Maine's Department of Marine Resources. He enumerated the biological advantages of removing a dam—any dam. (1) It gets rid of obstructions to migration. (2) It restores natural habitat. (3) The river resumes the natural variations of its flow. (4) The siltation of spawning and feeding habitat ceases in what had been the impounded pool. (5) It gets rid of debris. (6) It gets rid of unnatural temperatures downstream. (7) It removes turbines that kill juvenile fish. Unless you're a stocked trout in the cold water downstream from a dam in Arkansas, the rationale for dam removal is quite compelling from a fish's point of view.

Schools of striped bass had been seen by construction workers nosing up to Edwards Dam that morning. A big Atlantic salmon broached and—two feet out of water—just hung there, watching. A high-school bell was mounted on a post near the microphones, and Babbitt, King, and others—on schedule with the speeches and the downstream recession of the morning tide—began to ring it. And ring it. Evan Richert, of the Maine State Planning Office, shouted into the microphones, "Set the fishery free!" He did not say, "Set free the river!"

On the cofferdam near the west bank sat Reggie Barnes, of Alton, Maine, at the levers of a Caterpillar 345 backhoe with a two-and-a-half-yard bucket and a thirty-nine-foot ground-level reach. Even from across the river, it looked Cretaceous, its head above the trees. Facing east, it swung right, and it bit a few tons of gravel. After swinging farther to the right and dropping the load, it went back for more. It was eating the cofferdam. It ate from south to north, toward the restrained water. Swing left. Bite. Swing right. Drop. Swing left. Bite. The machine was opening a chasm, and the north end of the chasm was becoming a pillar of gravel separating air from water. Bite. The pillar thinned. Frankly, I had not imagined this moment in history to be dramatic—the engineering was so extensive, monumental, and controlled. I mean, a Stuka wasn't dropping one on the crest and flying off to Frankfurt. But this backhoe, positioned on the very structure it was consuming—swinging to and fro on the inboard end of the cofferdam—was hypnotizing a thousand people. It hadn't far to go. The bucket had not reached water before water reached the bucket. From a thousand feet away, even through binoculars, not much could be seen yet but occasional splashes in motion, south. They were occasional enough to cause Reggie Barnes to roll his treads and get the big backhoe out of there, fast. It scooted off the cofferdam and partway up a hill. A bottle of champagne had been cracked on the bucket before it all began, and now from beneath a mass of hard hats came a cheer that might have been audible in Portland. While the hard hats watched and the Nature Conservancy watched with the leaders of American Rivers, the licks and splashes increased in frequency and height above the cofferdam, which was now being eaten by the Kennebec River.

Rapidly, it widened and deepened its advantage. It became a chocolate torrent. It shot through the gap in the western end of the dam itself and smashed into the foundation wall of the gate-





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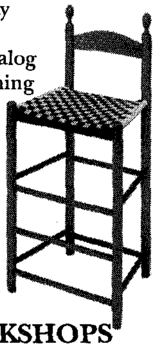

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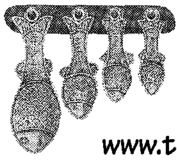

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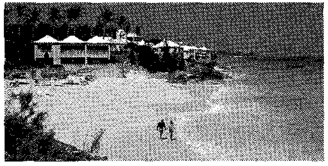

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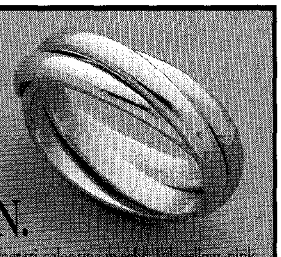

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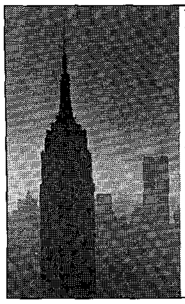

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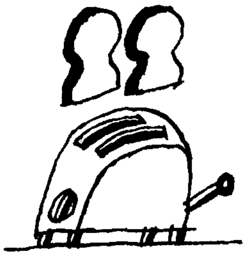
house, once the entry to the power canal. The foundation wall of the gatehouse consisted of very large blocks of granite. The liberated currents caromed off it and angled into the lower river. A milky brown plume spread through the clear water there and nearly reached the eastern shore, a thousand feet away. In eight minutes, the Kennebec, completely in charge of everything now, melted down the cofferdam until a channel had opened seventy feet wide. The rage of high water seemed to fly through the air before hitting the granite wall and exploding back into the river. In the Tree-Free Parking Lot, the assembled phalanges of the environmental movement were standing as one, standing on their chairs for a line of sight through a forest of elbows apexed with binoculars, framing Babbitt on a cell phone before the frothing river. The volume of the rapids grew. After the initial blowout of sediments, the thundering water turned white and the slicks were cordovan glass. The Kennebec River in Augusta, after a hundred and sixty-two years in the slammer, was walking.



AND twelve days thereafter, in the Old Town canoe, about halfway from Waterville to Augusta, we passed a concrete boat launch that had launched its last boat. Its lower lip was many yards back from the river and much higher than the surface of the water. Broad shingle flats had become exposed here and there, but mainly the banks of the river were so steep that evidence of the breaching was confined to the two sides. Small, hanging streams and small, hanging falls were cutting fresh canyons to the river. A kingbird went over us, a bald eagle, a cedar waxwing. A cormorant swam past us, and two beavers off the left bank slapped and disappeared.

Standing high in the river now, like stockade towers, were the rock-filled cribs of the log drives. Made from trees with a hundred and twenty rings, they disciplined the flow of logs. This stretch of river had a park-like appearance, with no structures but these emblems of the history of Maine. An island, high and elongate, sitting up like a warship on its hull of rock, had twenty-three of these towers leading to it and five away from its downstream end—a beautiful campsite. But for whom? When dams are built, the complaints of inundated communities gradually gurgle into silence, and when dams are destroyed—evidently—complaints in fresh demeanor come to life: the owner of the island is the nephew of the owner of the mainland east of the island. During the several months of deconstruction, as the pool above Edwards Dam gradually stabilized with the tailwaters below it, the island would become a part of the mainland, where properties legally extend to the thread of the river. A family may be destined for family court. Others—no less environmentally concerned than the Wilderness Society—have complained that an ecosystem sixteen decades old (no matter that it is man-made) is being destroyed, creating a serious threat to the yellow lampmussel and the tidewater mucket. On the day of the breaching of the dam, volunteers from Nokomis High School worked feverishly all afternoon rescuing lampmussels and muckets while baby lampreys squirmed in the muck around them. In the absence of Edwards Dam, carp and other untouchable species might get into tributary streams. When the State of Maine proposed building dams in the tributaries to block the carp, letters to editors shouted derision. A citizen of Augusta called the Edwards Dam breaching the "blunder of the century." Noting that the dam site is actually a fine place for a much higher dam and more hydroelectric power, another writer ridiculed a government "pushed by environmental wackos."

Dams are said to last about fifty years. One of four American dams is that old and eighty-five per cent will be by 2020. In the state of Washington, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has warned Condit Dam, on the White Salmon River, that fishways will soon be required. Condit is four hundred and seventy-one feet long and a hundred and twenty-three feet high. Removing the dam may be a cheaper alternative to fishways. On the Elwha River, the owner of two dams that have also blocked salmon has agreed to the destruction of the dams. Congress will probably pay for it. The United States Army Corps of Engineers is preparing a report on four dams on the Snake River, due in 2000. They date from the sixties and seventies, they are half to three-quarters of a mile wide, they irrigate thirty-six thousand acres, and they make enough power to light Seattle. From Pasco, Washington, to Lewiston, Idaho, they block a hundred and forty miles of river, and the price of their removal is a billion dollars. The Corps of Engineers, like any bureaucratic agency, has no higher agendum than its own survival. It can survive as well removing dams as building them.

On Fossil Creek, in Arizona, a paradise of rock ledges and travertine pools, it's 5.6 megawatts versus the Gila topminnow and the razorback sucker. Embrey Dam, on the Rappahannock River, in Virginia, has the same height and width that Edwards had in Augusta and cuts off well over a hundred miles of historical spawning grounds of shad. Removal would cost four million dollars, fish passage would cost 10.2. A dam on Malibu Creek, in California, is a hundred feet high, and the reservoir behind it is completely landfilled with silt. It is seventy-five years old. A rare species of steelhead used to run up there. Savage Rapids Dam, on the Rogue River, in Oregon, is thirty-nine feet high, four hundred and sixty-four feet wide, and was built eighty years ago to help small farmers whose farms are now real-estate subdivisions. The endangered Colorado pikeminnow would be considerably less endangered following the removal of Price-Stubb Dam, on the Colorado River, which was built for irrigation before the First World War and has not watered anything since 1919.

Since 1960, over a hundred small-river dams have been removed in the United States, nowhere as feverishly as in Wisconsin, where the Slabtown Dam, on the Bark River, was destroyed in 1992; the Wonewoc Dam, on the Baraboo River, in 1996; the Hayman Falls Dam, on the Embarrass River, in 1995; the Readstown Dam, on the Kickapoo River, in 1985; the Mellen Dam, on the Bad River, in 1967. Baraboo was Barbeau once. A barbeau is a sturgeon. The tribes called the river Ocoochery (Plenty of Fishes). Wisconsin has deconstructed forty-nine dams, ranging in height up to sixty feet and in length to four hundred and fifty.

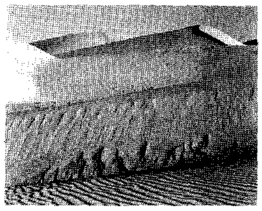
There are sixty-six thousand river dams in the United States five or more feet high. The highest—Oroville, on the Feather River—is seven hundred and seventy feet high. The greatest producer of power is Grand Coulee Dam, on the Columbia River, making six thousand megawatts. American Rivers once said that the power made at Edwards could be saved "by replacing seventy-five thousand light bulbs with energy-efficient bulbs." Grand Coulee appears safe unless someone comes along with a hundred and thirty-two million light bulbs.

To be completely free, the Kennebec River will have a more than metaphorically uphill struggle. In its watershed above Augusta are at least a hundred dams, ten in the main stem from Waterville to Moosehead Lake. In the resurrected rapids of this stretch above Augusta, its fifteen miles seemed both modest and momentous. It was about the length of Manhattan Island. A lot of fish could spawn there. In its possibilities as a state park, its beauty and seclusion, it rallied the nineteenth century. From no river in the country of the Kennebec's size or stature had a dam ever been removed. On the fresh current, we rounded a final bend. Down the long thoroughfare of water and trees we now saw—three and a half miles away and rising from mid-river like the blade of a gun sight—the bronze and granite Capitol of Maine. To left and right, above the trees, were the spires of two churches. With John's father, Alexander McPhedran, we had scouted early in the morning for a place to end the trip, and, with some difficulty, had found one, about a quarter of a mile through woods from a small roadside park. We had left a white-birch log on a rock to mark the spot. Seeing it now, a mile down, John McPhedran rummaged in his pack, removed a cell phone, and asked his father to pick us up. ♦

RAISED EYEBROWS DEPT.

[*From the Charleston* (*S.C.*) *Gazette*]

Officer Peter Roush, the new hire, said getting residents involved will quiet a lot of the complaints. "I think once we expose ourselves to the people in the town, and they expose themselves to us, we'll do fine," said Roush.



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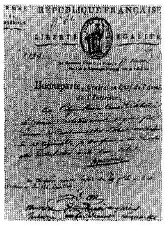
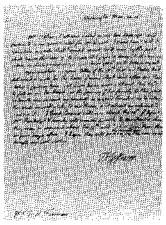


Napoleon I. Paris, 1796.



Thomas Jefferson. Washington, 1806.

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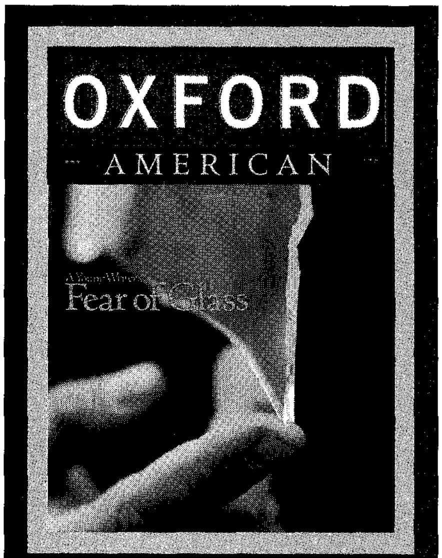

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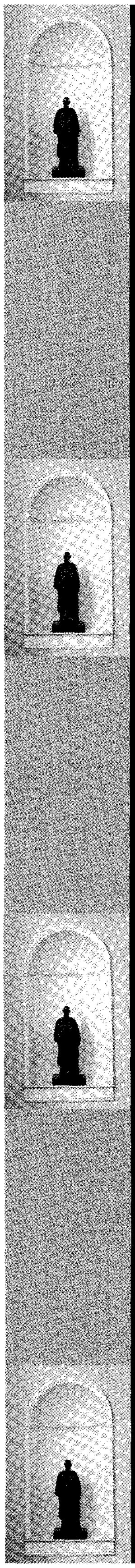

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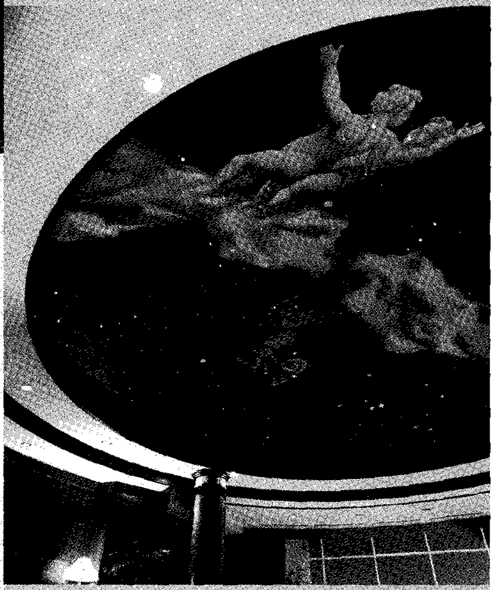

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PROFILE

THE POWER OF GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

Can the Nobel Prize-winning novelist rescue Colombia?

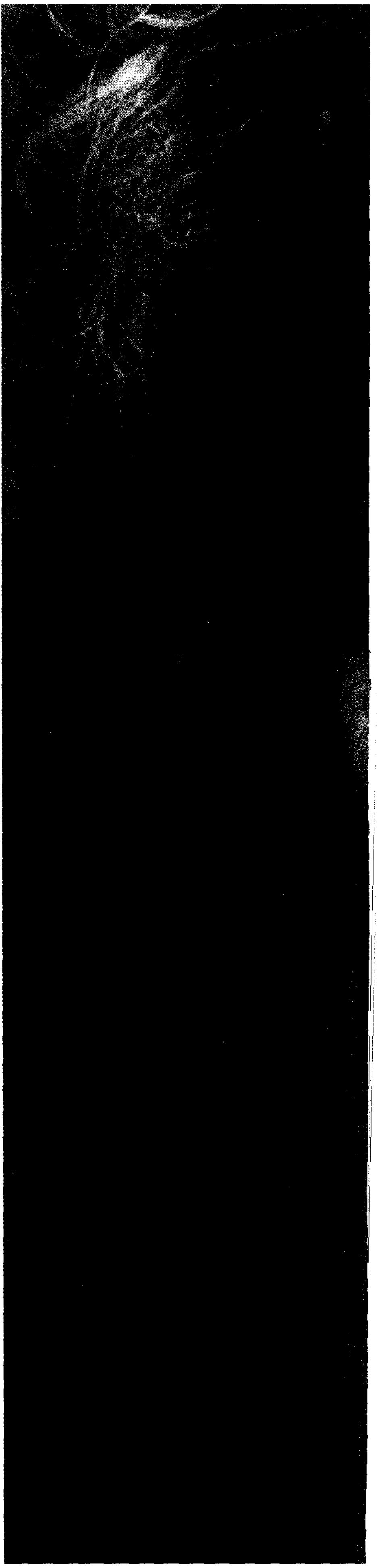
BY JON LEE ANDERSON

When Gabriel García Márquez leaves his apartment in Bogotá, he travels in a customized metallic-gray 1992 Lancia Thema Turbo, a midsize sedan with bulletproof windows and a bombproof chassis. It is driven by Don Chepe, a stocky former guerrilla fighter who has worked for García Márquez for more than twenty years. Several secret-service agents, sometimes as many as six, follow them in another vehicle. A nondescript bombproof sedan with a big engine is a reassuring car to have in a country where nearly two hundred people are kidnapped every month, and more than two thousand are murdered. In mid-August, Jaime Garzón, a popular political satirist, was assassinated as he drove to work. A man got off a motorcycle and shot him in the head while he was waiting at a red light. Garzón, like García Márquez, had acted as an intermediary between leftist guerrillas and the government, and he had received death threats from members of right-wing paramilitary organizations who don't want people negotiating with their enemies.

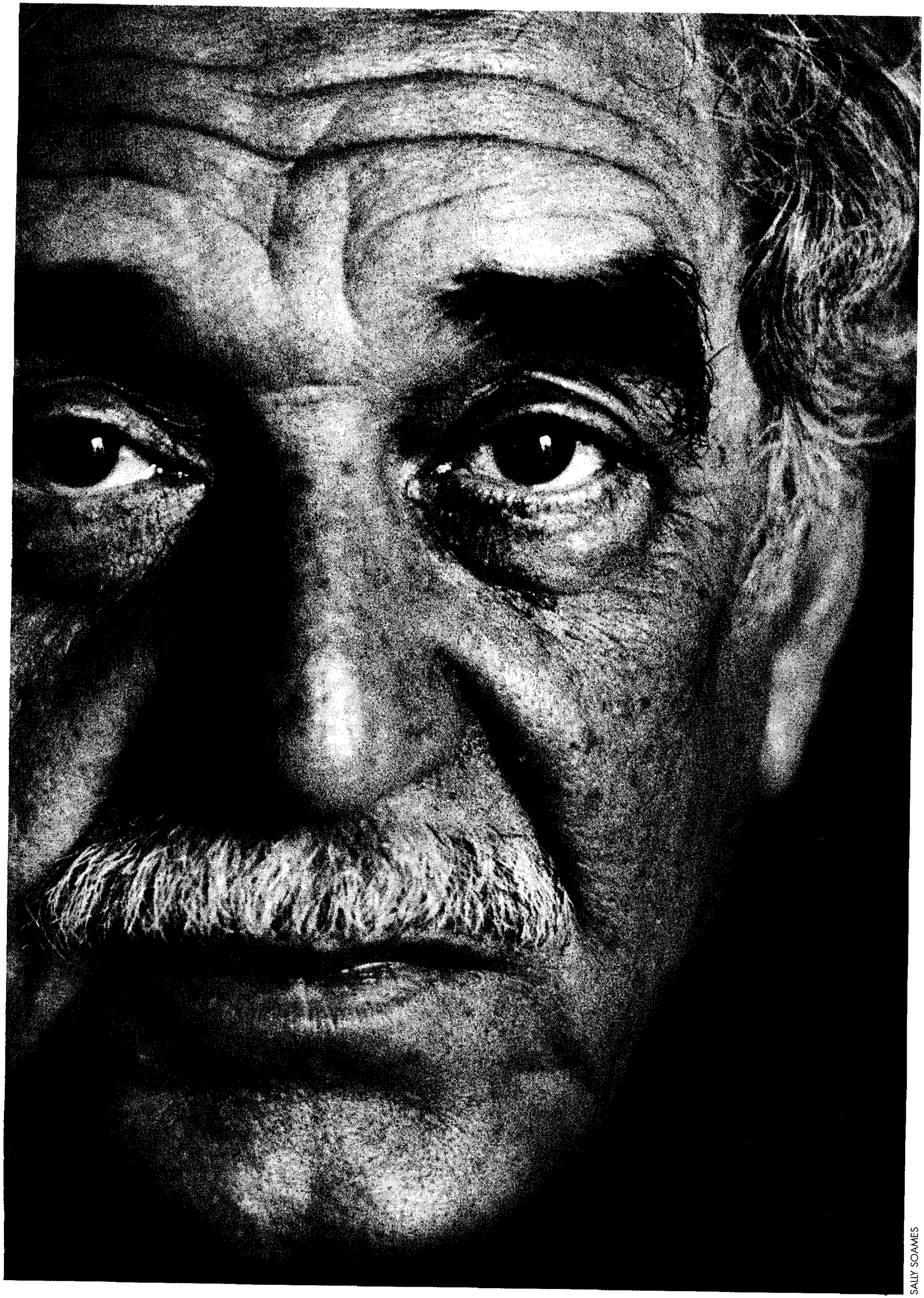
Bogotá sprawls for miles across a drizzly green mountain plateau in the northernmost section of the Andes. Overlooking the city is a long ridge of hills covered with vast, miserable shantytowns full of former peasant farmers and their families who have emigrated there from the countryside. During the last fifteen years, a million and a half Colombians have been displaced from their homes by political violence. Forty per cent of the country is controlled by Marxist guerrilla groups, who are at war with government troops and with right-wing militias that are financed by rich landowners and drug traffickers.

A few months ago, I took a taxi from my hotel in Bogotá to a house in the old colonial district of La Candelaria, in the center of town, where an emerald dealer had invited me to dinner. (Along with coffee, oil, cocaine, and heroin, Colombia is rich in emeralds, and supplies some sixty per cent of the world's market.) My driver stopped the car a hundred feet from the *esmeraldero's* house, and I got out. As I approached the front door, which was set back from the street and was covered by an archway, I saw two figures loping in my direction. One of them—a short, wild-looking, dirty fellow—reached me as I was ringing the *esmeraldero's* bell, but just then the door opened wide and two Alsatian dogs came snarling past me and attacked him. The next day, I told García Márquez about my experience, and he laughed, shaking his head at my folly. No Colombian with any sense would have been on that street at that hour, he said. "It's a good place to get killed." The middle class and the wealthy have long since moved out of the center of Bogotá and settled in the northern suburbs. Even there they live in fear of being robbed or kidnapped by criminal gangs, and those few who can afford it, like García Márquez, have armored cars, bodyguards, or both.

García Márquez and his wife, Mercedes, live in a spacious duplex, two floors of a four-story apartment building with floor-to-ceiling windows that look out over a landscaped park. The apartment is all white—carpets, sofas, and walls—and filled with art, including a huge early Botero and a series of exquisite erotic Indian miniatures. The day after I had been saved by the *esmeraldero's* dogs, the three of us sat around talking in a corner of their vast living room. Several dozen videotapes—Martin Scorsese's "The Last Temptation of Christ" was on top of the pile—were stacked next to a TV. Venetian blinds were drawn over the windows, and



García Márquez's hopes for peace may be thwarted by the U.S., and by his own illness.



SALLY SOAMES

the room was suffused with a gray light that went well with the faint odor of tobacco from Mercedes's cigarettes. Mercedes, who has been married to García Márquez for forty-one years, is a tall, striking woman with shoulder-length brown hair. She is the granddaughter of an Egyptian immigrant, whose influence seems to show up in her wide cheekbones and her large, penetrating brown eyes. García Márquez is a short, deep-chested man with a careful, almost regal bearing. He is seventy-two. He has soft brown eyes set in a comfortable, lined face. His curly hair is gray, and he has a white mustache and bushy black eyebrows. His hands are beautiful, with long slender fingers. He is an attentive and charming conversationalist, and what Colombians call a *mamagallista*—a joker.

In the course of several months of talks with me, García Márquez referred to Mercedes constantly, and invariably with proud affection. When he talked about his friendship with Fidel Castro, for instance, he remarked, "Fidel trusts Mercedes even more than he trusts me," and added, "She is the only person I know who can scold him." Another time, he mentioned the name of a mutual acquaintance, and after we had discussed him for a while he said thoughtfully, "Mercedes doesn't want him around anymore," in a way that left me in little doubt that Mercedes would have her way. She is his "link to the earth," a friend says. "She's the practical one, the one who looks after their properties, the lion at his side. He would be totally lost without her." They have two children: Rodrigo, who lives in Los Angeles and has just written and directed his first feature film; and Gonzalo, who is a graphic designer in Mexico City.

García Márquez has several homes, and although he was Colombia's most famous citizen long before he received the Nobel Prize in Literature, in 1982, Bogotá has never been his main residence. He and Mercedes have for many years spent most of their time in Mexico City and part of the year at their other homes, in Cuernavaca, Barcelona, Paris, Havana, Cartagena, and Barranquilla, on the Caribbean coast. Each of them is furnished in the same way—with white carpets, large glass coffee tables, modern art, a carefully chosen sound system, and an identical Macintosh computer. García Márquez is obsessive about such things. They make it possible for him to work wherever he is. He says that he usually wakes at five o'clock, reads a book until seven, dresses, reads the newspapers, answers his E-mail, and by ten—"no matter what"—is at his desk, writing. He stays there until two-thirty, then joins his family for lunch. After lunch, the writing day is over, and the afternoon and evening are devoted to "appointments, family, and friends."

Recently, García Márquez has been working on three novels and two volumes of memoirs, along with occasional pieces of journalism. He began his writing life as a journalist, and his last book, "News of Kidnapping," which was published in 1996, is in the straightforward, plain-speaking style of his newspaper columns rather than the allusive, "magical" style of the novels and stories. The book reconstructs the kidnappings of ten people in 1990 by Pablo Escobar, the head of the Medellín drug cartel. It is based on long interviews with the surviving victims of the kidnappings, and with those who were involved in the byzantine negotiations for their release. The central characters, well-connected journalists and politicians, are people who come from the social and professional worlds that García Márquez and Mercedes inhabit.

Politics and journalism have taken up much of García Márquez's time since early this year, when he became the majority owner of the weekly news magazine *Cambio*. He bought *Cambio* with his Nobel Prize money, which had been sitting in a Swiss bank for sixteen years. "I swear it's true, I had forgotten about it," he claims. It was Mercedes, he says, who "reminded" him that it was there. *Cambio* kept them in Bogotá when they would normally have been in Mexico or Europe. García Márquez attended editorial meetings and assigned stories and wrote articles that became cover stories. The magazine's circulation went from fourteen thousand to fifty thousand. "People here in Colombia are very interested in whatever Gabo has to say," says Pilar Calderón, *Cambio's* managing editor.

"Gabo" is what García Márquez is called by nearly everyone in the Spanish-speaking world. That or *el maestro*, or, in Colombia, *Nuestro Nobel*, our Nobel Prize winner. One of his friends remarked to me that García Márquez is in many ways *El Único Nobel*, the only Nobel Laureate, which struck me as fundamentally true, at least in Latin America. Another friend, Enrique Santos Calderón, the editor-in-chief of *El Tiempo*, Colombia's leading daily newspaper, says that the Nobel Prize was a vindication of Colombian culture. "In a country that's gone to shit, Gabo is a symbol of national pride."

THE widespread reverence that is felt for García Márquez amplified the rumors that began circulating early this summer about a mysterious illness that had overcome him. He was hospitalized

MY CHILDREN GREW

My children grew and flourished around tears and laughter
like fruit, like houses, but the tears and the laughter
stayed inside the kernel, just as they were. Our Father, Our King!
That's all for today on fathers and kings.
Go, children I begot: get yourselves into the next century,
when the tears and the laughter will continue, just as they were.
I remember giving them a stern warning:
"Never, never stick your hand out the window of a moving bus."
Once we were on a bus and my little girl piped up, "Daddy, that guy
stuck his hand into the outside!"

That's the way to live: to stick your hand into the infinite outside
of the world, turn the outside inside out,
the world into a room and God into a little soul
inside the infinite body.

—YEHUDA AMICHAI

(*Translated, from the Hebrew, by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld.*)

for a week in the middle of June, and then he holed up in his apartment in Bogotá. He was said to be undergoing treatment for exhaustion, a nervous breakdown, or leukemia. Seven years ago, a cancerous tumor was removed from one of his lungs, and the rumors about what was wrong with him this time became more and more dire. On July 9th, someone pretending to represent a wire agency sent a phony news flash out through the Internet that he had died in Mexico City the previous evening.

García Márquez says that he began feeling unwell last spring, and became so weak that he was in a state of collapse. He checked into a hospital, and once it was determined what was wrong with him (lymphatic cancer, although this was not acknowledged publicly for several months) he began to receive treatment and to feel stronger. One morning not long after he had returned from the hospital, I walked with him in the park below his apartment. He was dressed in a navy-blue woollen peacoat, blue sweatpants, and running shoes, and we were followed closely but discreetly by a nurse wearing a white smock, and by Don Chepe, who acts as García Márquez's bodyguard as well as his driver. After we had been walking for a few minutes, three young men who were riding their bicycles on a path at the park's edge recognized García Márquez and called out excitedly, "Maestro, how are you?" He was concentrating on his walking, but he acknowledged them with a slight wave and kept going. I saw that the three men had got off their bicycles and were staring with concern as he moved determinedly along, so I raised my hand and gave them a cheery thumbs-up sign. They smiled gratefully.

A few days later, a friend took me to the home of a prominent left-wing historian who has close ties to the leaders of Colombia's oldest, largest, and most powerful guerrilla organization, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, or FARC. Hearing that I had recently been with García Márquez, our host asked me, "How is he?" His expression was serious and attentive. When I told him that García Márquez was walking around and coherent but had lost a great deal of weight, his mouth tightened. "They say he has cancer," he said softly. He hoped it wasn't true. "In the terrible state it's in right now, the country could not withstand the weight of such news."

A FEW years ago, García Márquez likened Colombia's afflictions to a "Biblical holocaust." The country has been engulfed in a complicated civil war for more than half a century, and most of the victims of the violence have been civilians. They are killed by soldiers at roadblocks, taken hostage and tortured by paramilitary death squads, blown up by land mines, shot by drug traffickers because they are in the wrong place at the wrong time, massacred because they are thought to sympathize with one side or the other. Last fall, Human Rights Watch issued a chilling appraisal of life in Colombia which concluded, "Violations of international humanitarian law—the laws of war—are not abstract concepts in Colombia, but the grim material of everyday life. . . . Sometimes, armed men carefully choose their victims from lists. Other times, they simply kill those nearby, to spread fear. Indeed, a willingness to commit atrocities is among the most striking features of Colombia's war."

García Márquez began his life as a writer during the early years of a bloody conflict known as La Violencia, which came to a head on April 9, 1948, when the populist politician Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was assassinated on the street in front of his office in Bogotá. Between two hundred thousand and three hundred thousand people, most of them in the countryside, were killed during La Violencia, which lasted roughly until the early sixties. FARC evolved from the homegrown, Soviet-style *bolsheviques* that were established in the countryside during this period. The other large guerrilla organization, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, or E.L.N., entered the fray with Cuban backing and the inspiration of Che Guevara. By the early eighties, when the Medellín and Cali drug cartels had become powerful, and paramilitary armies were at war with both the traffickers and the guerrillas, there were so many possible sources of violence that a victim could quite understandably be confused about who his oppressor was. Early in "News of a Kidnapping," Maruja Pachón, who has just been captured by armed men as she returned home from work in her chauffeur-driven Renault, attempts to figure out the identity of her captors:

> Maruja tried to get a good look at the kidnappers, but the light was too dim. She dared to ask a question: "Who are you people?" The man with the two-way radio answered in a quiet voice:
>
> "We're from the M-19."
>
> A nonsensical reply: The M-19, a former guerrilla group, was legal now and campaigning for seats in the Constituent Assembly.
>
> "Seriously," said Maruja. "Are you dealers or guerrillas?"
>
> "Guerrillas," said the man in front.

Of course, he was lying. He was one of Pablo Escobar's men, and the kidnapping of Maruja was intended to put pressure on the government to make a deal with

Victoria Roberts

"Our house wine is abominable."

the leaders of the drug cartels and agree not to extradite them to the United States, where they would face harsher penalties than they would at home.

The distinction between the activities of the dealers and those of the guerrillas was further blurred after Pablo Escobar was killed and the big drug cartels were broken up in the mid-nineteen-nineties. The drug business is now divided among scores of mini-mafias, the paramilitaries, and the guerrillas themselves. FARC, which is the richest guerrilla organization in Latin America, controls an area where much of the world's cocaine is produced. It is believed to have some fifteen thousand armed fighters, while the E.L.N. has about five thousand. Both groups pay salaries to their combatants, and support themselves with various criminal activities, which include levying taxes on heroin and cocaine producers, kidnapping for ransom, and extorting money from North American and European oil companies to protect their drilling operations and pipelines.

Since Colombia supplies eighty per cent of the cocaine consumed in the United States, and much of the heroin, "narcoguerrillas" have become a big factor in United States drug policy. The Colombian Army says that it needs help to combat the guerrillas, and that quelling the guerrillas would quell the drug trade. Such assistance was suspended in 1996 and 1997 because Ernesto Samper, who was then the President, was accused of having accepted six million dollars in drug money to fund his election campaign. But a new President, Andrés Pastrana, took office last year, and the U.S. was persuaded that he could do what his predecessors had failed to do. Pastrana initiated talks with the guerrillas and ceded them a huge neutral zone that the Army couldn't enter. And he got a big aid package. Last fall, Congress allocated two hundred and eighty-nine million dollars to the Colombian police and Army, making Colombia the third-largest recipient of military aid, after Israel and Egypt.

García Márquez, who has often referred to himself as "the last optimist in Colombia," has been closely involved in the peace negotiations. He introduced Pastrana to his old friend Fidel Castro, who could facilitate talks with the guerrillas, and he helped restore good relations between Washington and Bogotá. "I won't say that it was Gabo who brought all this about," Bill Richardson, the U.S. Secretary of Energy, said early this summer, "but he was a catalyst." García Márquez was invited by the Clintons to the White House several times, and friends say he believed that he was going to not only carry off the immediate goal of getting some sort of negotiated settlement between the guerrillas and the government but also finally help bring about an improvement in relations between the United States and Cuba. "The U.S. needs Cuba's involvement in the Colombian peace talks, because the Cuban government has the best contacts with the guerrillas," he explained to me. "And Cuba is perfectly situated, only two hours away, so Pastrana can go there overnight and have meetings and come back without anyone knowing anything about it. And the U.S. wants this to happen." Then he smiled in a way that indicated he knew much more than he was telling me, as usual.

Until early this summer, García Márquez was sanguine about the negotiations Pastrana had put in motion. But then he became ill, and in July FARC launched a military offensive from the area that Pastrana had ceded them. It included a raid on Army units on the outskirts of Bogotá, and the peace talks, which had already been postponed, seemed more unlikely. A few days later, Pastrana's minister of defense announced that the U.S. was training and supplying an Anti-Narcotics Battalion of Colombian soldiers. Then he and the chief of the armed forces flew to Washington to ask for five hundred million dollars more in aid. Barry McCaffrey, the director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, who claims that coca production in Colombia has doubled in the last four years and that the guerrillas are responsible, urged Congress to appropriate a billion dollars for hardware and military advisers. "This is an emergency situation," he said. "You've got twenty-five thousand people out there with machine guns, mortars, rockets, and land mines."

García Márquez had to cancel one of our meetings in Bogotá because Pastrana and Felipe González, the former Spanish Prime Minister, were coming by to see him. Things were still at an impasse between the guerrillas and the government, but attempts were being made to put together a regional council of nations to serve as neutral guarantors for future negotiations. "I would really love to see Clinton again right now, but it's not possible in this situation," García Márquez

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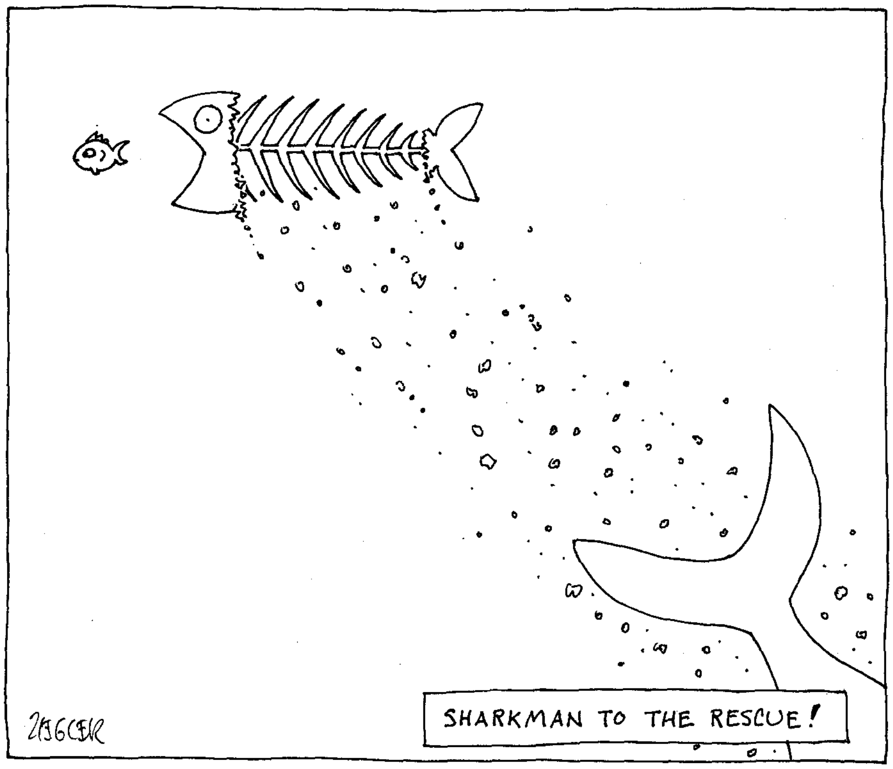

said. He didn't say whether he was referring to the changed politics or his own state of health, or both. But it was the bellicose stance Washington was taking that seemed to trouble him most. "Everything has changed since Kosovo," he said. "The situation in the world has changed totally. With Kosovo, Clinton has found the political legacy he wants to leave behind—the imperial American model."

Other critics of the Clinton Administration's new policy were conjuring up analogies with Vietnam, and warning of the perils of intervening militarily in a country that is geographically as well as politically complex. Much of Colombia's nearly four hundred and forty thousand square miles is practically inaccessible. Three ranges of the Andes divide it up, and there are vast swaths of forests and plains where no roads have been built. Some parts of the country are controlled by brutal paramilitary units that are in many cases operating in collusion with the Army, which has been accused of gross violations of human rights. In mid-July, the Army, which until recently has been notoriously inefficient, killed two hundred guerrillas in an aerial ambush that was assisted by U.S. satellite intelligence. The first known American military casualties in the narcoguerrilla conflict occurred on July 23rd, when a U.S. reconnaissance plane crashed into a mountain in a major drug-producing area in southern Colombia. Five American soldiers and two Colombian Air Force officers were killed.

In 1993, García Márquez wrote that Washington's "war on drugs" was merely an "instrument for further intervention in Latin America," and he castigated American policymakers for having "impoverished the Castilian tongue" by inventing the term "narcoguerrilla." It permitted the United States, he said, to "demonstrate that drug traffickers and guerrillas were one and the same thing, and they could consequently send troops to Colombia under the pretext of fighting some and imprisoning others." These are not unconventional views in Colombia, where the meddling of gringos is feared and resented. Indeed, the twentieth century began with a U.S. intervention that led to the loss of the isthmus of Panama, which was a province of Colombia. And it has been only ten years since the United States invaded Panama to extradite its de-facto head of state, General Noriega. García Márquez has consistently opposed the extradition of Colombian nationals—such as Pablo Escobar—to the United States, and has advocated negotiating with both drug-traffickers and guerrillas as the only realistic means of ending, or at least curtailing, the violence in Colombia. "Nobody has taken into account," he wrote in 1990, "to what extent the social and political situation of our great, ill-starred Colombia, with its centuries of rural feudalism, its thirty years of unresolved guerrilla conflicts, its long history of governments which have failed to represent the wishes of the people, has bred the drug-traffickers and all that they stand for."

García Márquez's views have enormous weight in Latin America. His prestige is such that he has the trust of both governments and revolutionaries. He was involved in negotiations to end the civil wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and he has often helped gain the release of hostages kidnapped by various factions. "Gabo loves to conspire," his friend María Elvira Samper says, "to do things clandestinely. He likes diplomacy, not politics. He says he is *un gran conspirador*." But he has come under a good deal of criticism for enjoying his role too much, and for becoming enamored of men in power. Friends who acknowledge that there is some truth to the criticism attribute his susceptibility to the charms of Castro and Clinton in part to the thrill of having come so far from his roots. "Remember," a woman in Bogotá said to me, "Gabo came from *un pueblucho de mierda*"—a shitty little nothing town—"on the coast, and he could easily have ended up one of those guys selling sunglasses to tourists on the beach." She said this affectionately, and I don't think she meant to be patronizing, but it was the condescending kind of thing that people in Bogotá have always said about people who live on the Caribbean coast.

The place where García Márquez spent his childhood has more of a historical and geographical affinity to the Antilles than to the cold, austere highlands around Bogotá. A few years ago, he commissioned the Colombian architect Rogelio Salmona to build a house in Cartagena, a beautiful sixteenth-century coastal city that is still surrounded by stone ramparts. La Casa del Escritor, the House of the Writer, as García Márquez's house is known, is a serried jumble of geometrical squares and oblongs surrounded by a high, cinnamon-colored wall. During the day, a single *papayera*, a papaya-eating songbird, hops about in a cage that dangles over the narrow street in front of the house from an old-fashioned street lamp. From 7 A.M. until 7 P.M., the *papayera* is under the protective custody of policemen who stand watch with shotguns. They are there, I was told by one of them, to protect the *papayera* from the dastardly *marías mulatas*, the crows. He assured me that if the bird were to be left alone in the garden even its cage could not protect it.

In the heat of the day, the policemen take advantage of the shade of a neighboring building, the Hotel Santa Clara, which was built in 1617 as a convent but is now a boutique hotel owned by the French Sofitel chain. The convent figures prominently in "Of Love and Other Demons," a novella García Márquez published in 1994. In the preface, he explains that in 1949, when he was a young reporter in Cartagena, he was assigned to cover the story of the emptying of the convent's crypts. "The gradual collapse of the roof had left its beautiful chapel exposed to the elements," he wrote, "but three generations of bishops and abbesses and other eminent personages were still buried there." In a niche on the high altar, laborers found the skull of a young girl with a seventy-foot-long "stream of living hair the intense color of copper." The foreman of the construction crew explained that this was not unusual for a two-hundred-year-old skull, but García Márquez "did not think it so trivial a matter, for when I was a boy my grandmother had told me the legend of a little twelve-year-old marquise, with hair that trailed behind her like a bridal train, who had died of rabies caused by a dog bite and was venerated in the towns along the Caribbean coast for the many miracles she had performed. The idea that the tomb might be hers was my news item for the day."

In the novella, which takes place in Cartagena in the eighteenth century, when the city was one of the centers of the Spanish slave trade and a colonial headquarters of the Inquisition, the girl is sent to the convent to be exorcised after she has been abused and driven half mad by inept doctors who mistakenly suspect that she has rabies. Her exorcist, an erudite priest, falls in love with her and is punished for heresy. The bishop takes over the exorcism, and she dies while being tortured by him. The most sympathetic characters in the book, aside from the girl and her tormented lover, are an outcast Jewish doctor with a vast library of forbidden books; two women who are incarcerated for being insane but travel about mysteriously and sometimes invisibly; and a priest who lives among the poor and has a humanist view of the martyred girl's situation. She has been rejected by her melancholic father, the Marquis, and by her mother, a drug- and sex-besotted *mestiza*, and raised by mulatto and black servants. It is their culture, transplanted African culture, that the Church demonizes and tries to exorcise.

Today, the stone walls of the old convent are a chic façade for the hotel, and García Márquez's books are displayed prominently in the lobby gift shop, but by and large the neighborhood has not changed much in the fifty years since García Márquez was writing a column for the local newspaper, *El Universal*. The narrow streets are lined with paving stones and surrounded by red, blue, and yellow tiled houses with corrugated-tin roofs. Laundry hangs from carved wooden balconies, children play in the streets, and people wearing undershirts and flip-flops sit in their doorways talking to their neighbors. Cuban *son*, Puerto Rican salsa, Colombian *cumbia*, and the tinny accordion wails of *vallenato* blare from radios. Horse taxis, which are called *huelepedos*, or "farties," by the locals, clip-clop by, carrying tourists and tainting the air with bouquets of chaff and dung. Although Cartagena is one of Colombia's few "safe" tourist havens, political violence is never far from anyone's mind. At a dinner party there I met a woman whose brother had been kidnapped and buried alive. The brother of our host had joined a paramilitary group and had been killed by guerrillas.

A few years ago, García Márquez established the Foundation for New Ibero-American Journalism in Cartagena. It is run by Jaime Abello Banfi, a former television executive, and is funded by UNESCO and the Inter-American Development Bank, among other organizations. Seasoned journalists are invited to Cartagena to give workshops for young Latin-American reporters. García Márquez holds seminars whenever he can. Cartagena has also become his large family's de-facto headquarters. He is the eldest of eleven children, all but one of whom are still alive. His ninety-four-year-old mother and most of his siblings still live along the coast.

García Márquez was born in Aracataca, a down-at-the-heels town a hundred miles inland from Cartagena, on March 6, 1927. He was the first child of Luisa Santiaga Márquez, the daughter of Colonel Nicolás Márquez, a veteran of the War of a Thousand Days, which until the recent conflagration was the most violent and lethal civil war in Colombia's history. It began in 1899 and lasted for roughly three years. The forces of the Liberal and Conservative Parties inflicted hideous suffering on each other, and as many as a hundred thousand people died, out of a population of four million. Colonel Nicolás Márquez was a member of the Liberal Party, the party that started the war and lost it. A two-party system has existed in Colombia since the middle of the nineteenth century, and although there are no absolute distinctions between the two groups, Liberals are traditionally anticlerical and are proponents of social and labor reforms. García Márquez's father, Gabriel Eligio García, was a Conservative, a frustrated medical student who had arrived in Aracataca to take up a salaried post as the town's telegraph operator. The Colonel disapproved of him, primarily for reasons of politics and social standing, but he was indefatigable in pursuit of Luisa. (Their courtship is the basis for the mad love of Florentino Ariza and Fermina Daza in the novel "Love in the Time of Cholera," which García Márquez published in 1985.) Soon after the birth of "Gabito," the boy's parents moved to Ríohacha, a town two hundred miles away, on the coast, and left him to be raised by the Colonel, his wife, and three aunts.

García Márquez's grandfather, who is a recognizable character in much of his fiction, told him stories about killing a man in a duel, about fighting in the civil war, about the massacre of workers by the United Fruit Company the year after Gabito was born. Meanwhile, his aunts and grandmother—who were from the remote Guajira peninsula, a barren territory where the indigenous inhabitants have managed to maintain much of their culture—fed him on a steady and disquieting diet of folk tales, ghost stories, and legends of the supernatural. When García Márquez was nine, he went to live with his parents, who were virtual strangers to him. His father had become an itinerant homeopath and pharmacist, and the family moved around for a couple of years before settling in the town of Sucre. He never lived in Aracataca again, but it remained the wellspring of his fictional world, most particularly as

Macondo, the home of the Buendía family in "One Hundred Years of Solitude."

GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ'S younger brother Jaime, who is a civil engineer by profession and an obsessive conversationalist by nature, and his wife, Margarita, an architect, offered to take me to Aracataca. They met me at the airport near the sombre port city of Santa Marta, where Simón Bolívar died on his final tragic journey into exile, an odyssey that García Márquez re-created in 1989 in "The General in His Labyrinth."

"We have to leave Aracataca by four," Jaime said. If we dallied, we would run the risk of meeting a patrol of guerrillas or paramilitaries. "And when they see you, they'll kidnap you, and there'll be nothing I can do about it." We were stopped at several Army roadblocks as we made our way through a sweltering dull-green landscape of acacia trees and thornbush, but in a couple of hours we were safely in the bleak geometry of the banana plantations that surround Aracataca and are the reason for its existence, just as they were when García Márquez was a child. Jaime told everyone we met that he wanted to be out of Aracataca and on the way back to Santa Marta well before nightfall, and then, with a nod in my direction, he'd quip, "*No vaya ser que me pesquen al gringo*"—"God forbid they should snatch the gringo"—which elicited a chuckle every time.

Aracataca is a town of one-story houses and little shade. A huge billboard emblazoned with García Márquez's likeness has been erected on the outskirts, with a quotation from him painted in large letters: "One day I returned to my home, Aracataca, and I discovered that it is a combination of reality and nostalgia that is the raw material of my work." There are some traditional Caribbean plank houses with high-peaked tin roofs still standing, but most people live in grids of gaudily painted cement-block dwellings. The tall, dusty, bitter-almond trees with big green leaves that ring the central plaza in front of the church are the same trees, Jaime told me, that his brother described in the passage in "One Hundred Years of Solitude" that tells of the founding of Macondo:

> It was José Arcadio Buendía who decided during those years that they should plant almond trees instead of acacias on the streets, and who discovered, without ever revealing it, a way to make them live forever. Many years later, when Macondo was a field of wooden

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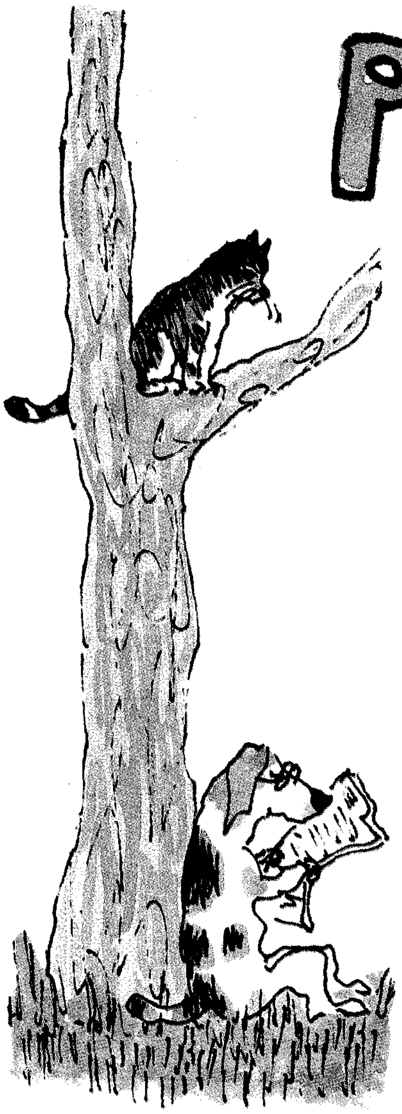
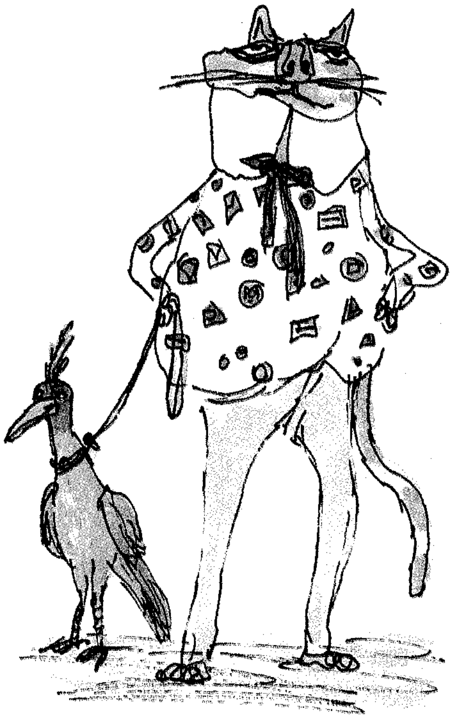
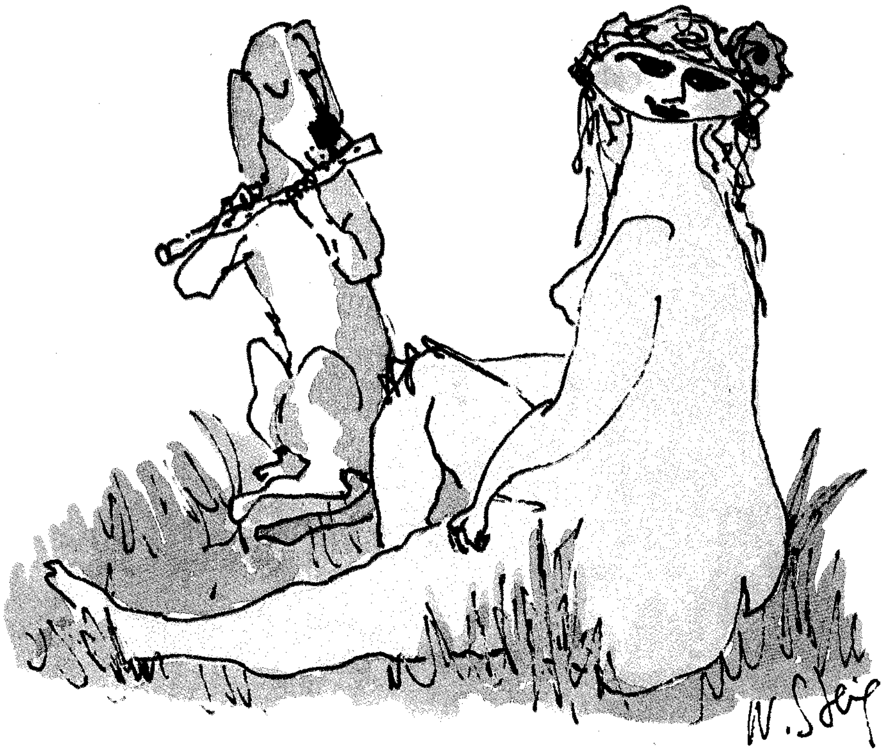
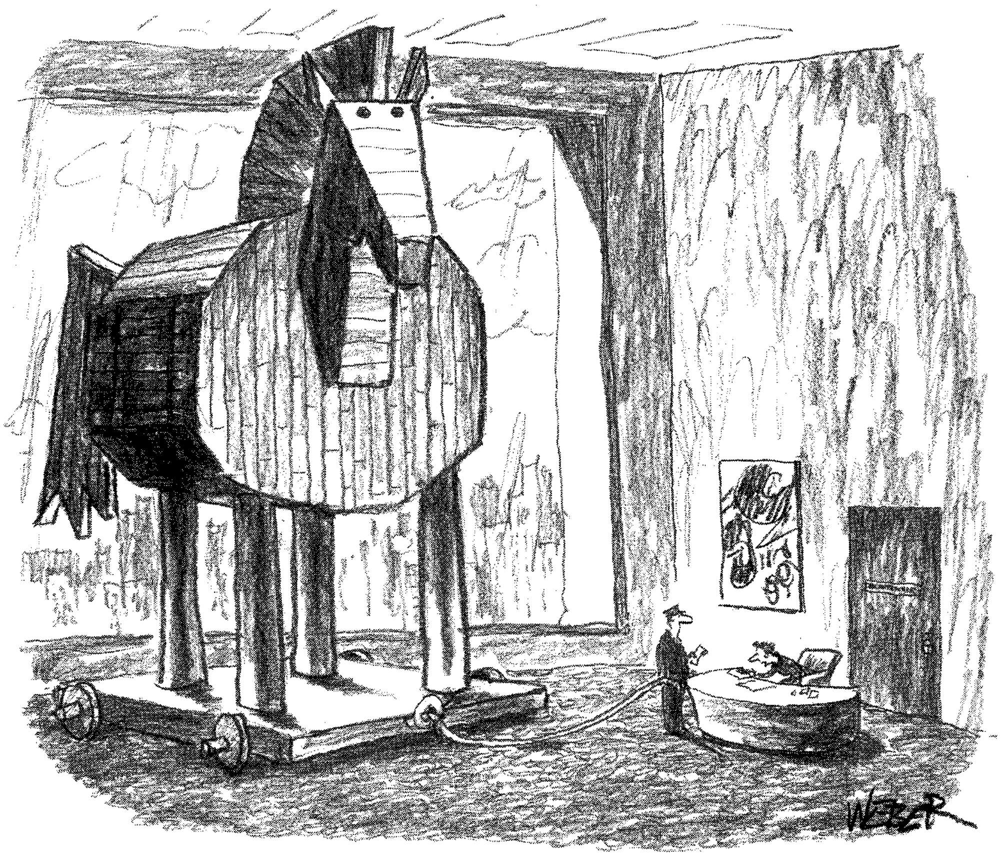
PAIRS

BY WILLIAM STEIG









"Mr. Mosbacher, are you expecting anything via U.P.S.?"

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houses with zinc roofs, the broken and dusty almond trees still stood on the oldest streets, although no one knew who had planted them.

We had arrived on the final day of the festivities celebrating Colombia's independence from Spain in 1819, and everyone who was not taking a nap had assembled in a garbage-strewn lot at the edge of town, where a rudimentary *corraleja*, a wooden bullring, had been erected. Wide-eyed groups of adolescent girls in bright dresses strolled arm in arm, flirting with young men. Peasants with straw hats and angular faces stood in the shade of the rickety *corraleja* gaping at the people milling around and waiting for the bulls to be unloaded from trucks so that the afternoon's corrida could begin. Sweating venders tended painted boxes on wheels, from which they sold *chicharrones* (pork rinds), colored shaved ices, and hot corncakes.

Jaime stopped at a house and knocked on the door. The door opened and closed again, and a few minutes later a man came out, combing his hair and smiling excitedly. He was the curator of the Casa Museo Gabriel García Márquez, the house where García Márquez was born, which sits on a quiet back street lined with acacia and almond trees. The curator led us through the front of the museum, a small cinder-block bungalow erected by the last owners, into the back yard, where part of the original Márquez family house still stands. All that is left is a two-room, white-painted clapboard shack with a zinc roof.

The economy of Aracataca, and of the surrounding region, was dominated by the United Fruit Company (now Chiquita Brands International) for most of the early part of this century. The founder of United Fruit, which was based in Boston, began buying land here in 1894, and by the mid-nineteen-twenties the area had become the third-largest exporter of bananas in the world. La Fruit, as the company is known to the locals, did not own most of the plantations, but it bought the bananas from growers, controlled the railroad that took them to the port, and managed the distribution of irrigation water. Although the workers were paid by the company and spent their money at the company stores, they did not technically work for United Fruit, and the company did not provide benefits, which was one of the issues that precipitated the 1928 banana strike. The nascent Colombian Communist Party sent representatives to organize the banana workers, many of whom were shot during demonstrations, an event known locally as the Slaughter of '28. Some of García Márquez's earliest memories are of going with his grandfather to the fence around La Fruit's residential compound a few years later to gape in wonderment at the oblivious *norteamericanos* playing games on clipped lawns. The government suppressed information about the killings, and virtually nothing had been written about them until García Márquez made the incident the culminating event in "One Hundred Years of Solitude," where thousands of workers are machine-gunned in the town square and their bodies transported to the coast to be thrown into the sea. A torrential rain sets in for nearly five years, after which no memory of the event exists.

The United Fruit Company cut back production drastically during the Depression of the nineteen-thirties, and the market for bananas continued to suffer through the Second World War. Around 1965, La Fruit pulled out of Aracataca permanently. We visited the old company compound, an unkempt smattering of large plantation houses set under mature trees. Jaime found some city officials in an office in one of the buildings. They explained to us, with the wan expressions of those who don't really believe what they are saying, that the municipality of Aracataca has plans to turn the compound into a tourist hotel. Not far away, among the stick palisades and shacks of a recent "invasion," as the occupation of land by squatters is called, some forty families were living in a bare encampment. I asked the officials who the newcomers were, and one of them, a young man, replied, "I don't know, probably *desplazados*"—war refugees. He was unsure because no one had inquired.

We got out of Aracataca before four, and as we journeyed back toward the coast, with Margarita driving, Jaime regaled me with stories of a visit he made to New York City with Gabito a few years ago. They had gone to a club to hear Woody Allen play the clarinet, and

Gabito had lunch with Henry Kissinger. Jaime, who is an ardent baseball fan, said that he begged off and went alone to see a game at Yankee Stadium. "I almost died of happiness," he said. "When I told Gabito afterward that I had eaten a hot dog at Yankee Stadium, he said he wished he could've been there. I got the impression that maybe his lunch with Kissinger had been a little boring."

When I left Santa Marta, I headed west toward Barranquilla, a city a hundred miles up the coast. The road skirts the edge of a great swamp that, like an inland sea, stretches between the coastal spit of beach and the great meandering delta of the Magdalena River. My driver, a small, piratical-looking man named Hermes, informed me that a particularly fetid-looking slum spread out along the road was Ciénaga, the site of the banana massacre in 1928. Ciénaga sits smack in the middle of a ruined mangrove swamp that was destroyed by the construction of the road that now bisects it. On the other side of its shacks, the stubble of the old trees protrudes above the surrounding muck like stalagmites. Refuse is strewn everywhere, and raw sewage stands in stagnant pools of water. There is nothing beyond the slum but parched land, white with salt and devoid of life. It was here, Hermes said, where "all of Colombia's evils began, back in the days of La Fruit." Scowling out the window at miserable Ciénaga, he hissed. "All the guerrillas, the paramilitaries, all the violence—everything we're suffering from now—comes from here."

When García Márquez was fifteen, he was sent to a public boarding school for gifted students in Zipaquirá, a small provincial town near Bogotá. It was his introduction to the sombre highlands of Colombia, and to Bogotá's aloof and conservative society. He was lonely and felt out of place, but it was during his years at the school that he discovered his talent for writing and his interest in politics. Several of his teachers were leftists, and he graduated with a Marxist world view. "When I left there," he said years later, "I wanted to be a journalist, I wanted to write novels, and I wanted to do something to bring about a more just society." Photographs of García Márquez at twenty, when he was a student at the University of Bogotá, show a skinny, badly dressed young man. He was studying law to please his father, but he had already begun to neglect his studies in favor of trying to write. The national daily newspaper *El Espectador* published his first short stories, and lauded him as "a new and notable writer." Then, in the spring of 1948, in the rioting that followed the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, the pension where García Márquez lodged was damaged by fire, and he put his books, the original copies of his first stories, and the only copies of his most recent work in a suitcase and tried to take them to the safety of an uncle's apartment. Everything was confiscated by a Gaitanista mob at a barricade. The University of Bogotá shut down, and García Márquez transferred to the University of Cartagena, but he soon abandoned his studies for a reporter's job. A year later, he moved to Barranquilla, where he rented a room in a brothel, wrote a newspaper column, and stayed up nights to work on short stories.

Barranquilla is situated on a promontory between the Magdalena River and the sea. It is a chaotic urban labyrinth of a million people where automobiles careen around donkey carts laden with green fodder grass that has been freshly cut from the marshes outside town. Bright-painted kiosks advertise aphrodisiacal foods, and the older residential lanes are lined with flowering shade trees. One of García Márquez's brothers, Luis Enrique, lives there, and he invited me for lunch, along with two of his sisters, Ligia and Aida, a former nun. Luis Enrique is a retired accountant of seventy-one, and resembles his older brother, although he is stockier, and his hair is whiter. Like their father, he is a Conservative. "It's genetic," he says. Luis Enrique is addicted to his computer, and spends his nights surfing the Net. Until recently, Aida taught theology at a Barranquilla high school where a "Gabriel García Márquez Department" has been created. Ligia lives in Cartagena and helps look after their mother, who is quite frail. Ligia has inherited her grandmother's faith in the supernatural world. She told me she had had a series of "strange dreams" a few years ago in which the figure of Abraham came to her, and she subsequently decided to become a Mormon. It isn't so different from Catholicism, she assured me. "We also believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

After lunch, I offered Ligia and Aida a lift. My driver recognized Aida from her days as a nun, and they began trading stories about a local priest. I heard Aida say, "He performs miracles." The driver said he'd been to a service the day before at which a woman who was possessed became calm after the priest laid hands on her. "It works if you have faith," Aida said. Ligia then told me that all this had been outlined in the Scriptures. When Satan's accomplices were vanquished, she explained, they were left without their bodies, but their spirits lived on. Some of them had become pigs, but the others float around looking for openings in human beings, and when they find a weak person in they go. That is where the priest does battle, getting rid of those Satanic spirits. Aida and the driver nodded in agreement, and it was clear to me that all of them believed literally what Ligia had said. "The world Gabo writes about, the one they call magical realism, is actually real; it's the one we live in," Mirtha Buelvas, a social psychologist in Barranquilla, said to me. I had heard other Colombians say the same thing, but it made more sense in Barranquilla than in Bogotá.

In 1954, García Márquez moved back to Bogotá to write for *El Espectador*. The next year, his first novella, "La Hojarasca" ("Leaf Storm") was published, with a modest print run. Around this time, when La Violencia was at its height, claiming thousands of lives in the countryside, García Márquez began secretly attending meetings of a Communist Party cell, and was soon summoned to meet the underground leader of Colombia's Communists, who offered to be a source for his stories. He also advised García Márquez to stop going to meetings if he didn't plan to become an active member of the Party. García Márquez took his advice and left, although he has said that he retains a soft spot for "the comrades who were the first colonizers of my political conscience."

In 1955, he was sent to Europe by *El Espectador* to cover everything from a Big Four summit meeting in Geneva to the Venice Film Festival and an Italian murder scandal. He also visited Poland and Czechoslovakia and spent a few months at an avant-garde film school in Rome before settling down in Paris. When *El Espectador* was closed down by the government, García Márquez cashed in his return plane ticket and stayed on. In Paris, he spent almost all of 1956 writing and rewriting the novella "No One Writes to the Colonel." Then, in the summer of 1957, he visited Russia and drove through Eastern Europe with a Colombian friend, Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza. His dispatches from the trip were later published in Bogotá as a magazine supplement called "Ninety Days Behind the Iron Curtain," in which García Márquez shows himself to be a sympathetic but not uncritical observer of life in the Soviet Union. After visiting Moscow as a "delegate" to a Communist Party Music Festival, for instance, he wrote:

> My definitive impression is that the Soviet phenomenon—from its most unusual aspects to the simplest ones—is so complex that it cannot be reduced to propagandistic formulas, neither capitalist nor communist. The Soviets have a different mentality. Things that are of great importance to us aren't to them. And vice-versa. Maybe that was why I didn't fully understand the worries of that tired, parsimonious interpreter resembling Charles Laughton who came to see me off at the border. "We thought all the delegates had left," he said. "But if you want we can send for children to bring you flowers. Shall we?"

Later that year, García Márquez went to Caracas to work with Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza on a magazine, *Momento*, just in time for the popular Army uprising that overthrew the Venezuelan dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez. That was when, García Márquez says, he first became interested in power. The day of the coup, he went with other reporters to stand outside the door of the room where the Army commanders were haggling over who would be Venezuela's next ruler. "I was just there like all the others, covering the news and hoping the meeting would end quickly so I could go home and go to sleep," he told me. "Suddenly the door opened and a general came out walking backward, his gun drawn and pointing into the room, his boots covered with mud." As he watched, transfixed, García Márquez said, the general crossed the room and, still walking backward and holding his gun out, he went down the stairs and out the front door to the street. Within moments of the general's dramatic exit, a decision was made in the room: Venezuela's new leader would be Rear Admiral Wolfgang Larrazábal. "I was amazed that this was how power could be decided," García Márquez said. "At that moment, something happened."

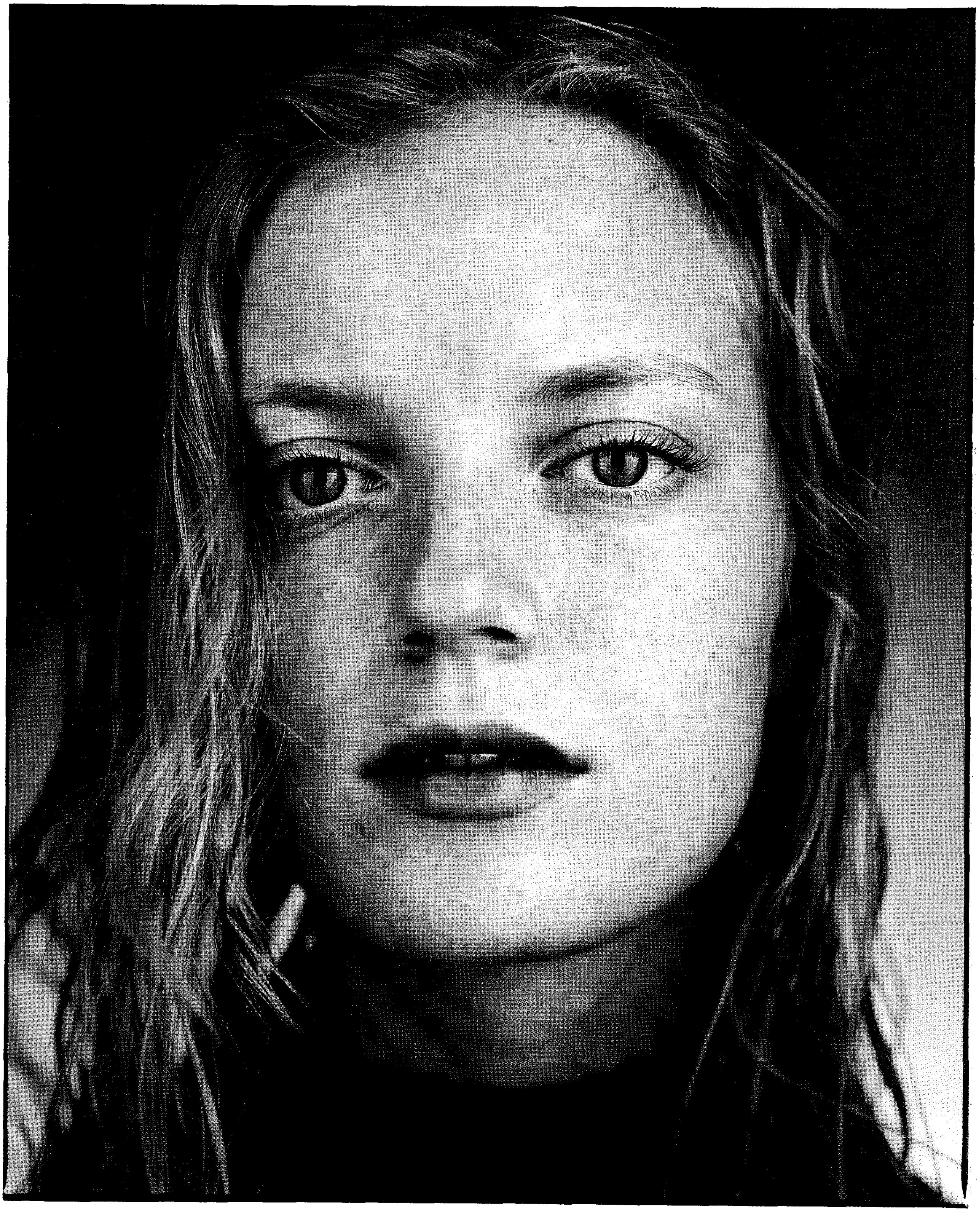
He began thinking about writing a novel about a dictator. "My interest was reconfirmed a year later with my visit to Cuba, of course. Who couldn't have been impressed by that?" He and Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza were among the first journalists to arrive in Havana after Castro seized power in 1959. They covered the purge trials that followed the triumph of the revolution. The circuslike atmosphere of the trial of a notorious Army major named Jesús Sosa Blanco, which was held in Havana's sports stadium, and which ended with a guilty verdict and his summary execution, gave García Márquez grist for his future "Latin-American dictator novel"—"The Autumn of the Patriarch," which was published sixteen years later, in 1975. The victorious revolution of the Cuban guerrillas quickly replaced the two friends' enthusiasm for Venezuela's more limited "democratic restoration," and within a year they were running the Bogotá office of Prensa Latina, the newly formed Cuban news agency, which was headed by Jorge Ricardo Masetti, a young Argentine journalist who had become a protégé of Che Guevara's.

In the meantime, García Márquez had married Mercedes Barcha, the daughter of a pharmacist in Sucre, where his parents lived. By early 1961, they and their newborn first child, Rodrigo, were living in a midtown Manhattan hotel while García Márquez worked at Prensa Latina's New York office. Tensions between the U.S. and Cuba were building, and he received threatening phone calls from angry Cuban exiles. That spring, in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs invasion, hardline pro-Soviet Cuban Communists took over many government posts, and Masetti resigned his position. García Márquez quit in solidarity with him, and he and Mercedes and the baby got on a bus headed south, to explore the world of William Faulkner. They remember seeing signs saying "No dogs or Mexicans allowed." When they reached New Orleans, Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza wired them a hundred and twenty dollars, and that got them as far as Mexico City, and, as García Márquez says, they've "never really left."

In 1966, after a yearlong writing stint, García Márquez completed "One Hundred Years of Solitude." For my benefit, he repeated the well-known story of how Mercedes had to pawn her hair dryer and their electric heater to pay for the postage to mail the finished manuscript—in two separate lots, because they couldn't afford to mail the whole thing all at once—to his Argentine publisher, who printed eight thousand copies. They sold out in a week, mostly at newsstands in subway stations in Buenos Aires. Although the Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes had written enthusiastically about the book in a literary magazine after he saw some pages in manuscript, and several excerpts had appeared in small journals, and although the Boom in Latin-American fiction—with work by Fuentes, the Argentine writer Julio Cortázar, and the Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa—was well under way, the popular response to "One Hundred Years of Solitude" was almost unimaginable. The book has by now been translated into more than thirty languages and has sold around thirty million copies. It is the most famous manifestation of the Boom, and García Márquez is the most celebrated of the prominent Boom writers.

GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ likes to claim, with a kind of false modesty, that he is "really a journalist who just happens to write some fiction on the side." He is being only partly disingenuous, since over the years he has churned out hundreds of articles, op-ed pieces, and essays. Most of this work from the seventies and eighties, his most radical period politically, is in the Latin-American tradition of *periodismo militante*, left-wing political journalism. There are reports from the war in Angola and postwar Vietnam, and several scoops on previously secret aspects of Latin America's revolutionary history, thanks to his privileged access to Fidel Castro and a variety of guerrilla leaders. García Márquez's friend Enrique Santos Calderón says that he has mellowed in recent years, that "he's essentially a Social Democrat now, with a little Communist hidden in his heart." It is probably accurate to say that his politics are a hybrid of residual youthful Marxism, traditional Latin-American anti-imperialism, and Western European-style socialism, but he is often called a leftist extremist, especially by his critics in North America, and especially because of his relationship with Castro.

García Márquez has had a "Cuba problem" since 1971, when the Cuban poet Heberto Padilla was arrested for "counter-revolutionary activity." A group



SHOWCASE *The actress Sarah Polley is only twenty, but she creates mystery through her reserve—a talent due, perhaps, to a life in front of the camera. She has worked in TV and films (including "The Sweet Hereafter" and "Go") since the age of four. As the star of "Guinevere," Polley seems to be hiding something powerful; finding out what it is should occupy moviegoers for years to come. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.*

of well-known intellectuals, including Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, wrote a letter to Castro protesting the arrest. Since García Márquez was travelling and out of touch, Plinio took the liberty of adding his name to the petition. Padilla was released from detention but forced to go through a grotesque, Soviet-style public "confession," and the spectacle led many people who had previously endorsed the Castro regime to break with it. A second, public letter of protest was signed by everyone who had signed the first letter, except for Julio Cortázar—and García Márquez. Then, in 1975, García Márquez went to Cuba, intending to write *the* book on the revolution. He never published the book, but he wrote a series of articles, and he met and became friends with Castro.

Many years later, Plino Apuleyo Mendoza asked him, for the record, why, just when so many of his friends had distanced themselves from Cuba, he'd decided to support it. García Márquez's reply was both sphinxlike and smug: "Because I have much better and more direct information, and a political maturity that allows me a more serene, patient, and humane comprehension of the reality." What he was alluding to, it seems, was his line of communication with Fidel Castro. In the end, García Márquez did get involved in the Padilla case, and he helped obtain Castro's permission for the poet to leave Cuba in 1980, but his position remains puzzling and unacceptable to many people. Vargas Llosa calls him "Castro's courtesan," and the exiled Cuban writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante accuses him of suffering from "totalitarium delirium." "I believe that when Fidel dies, the same thing will happen as when Stalin died," Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza said to me one afternoon in the lobby of my hotel in Bogotá, a few days before he left the country to avoid being murdered by guerrillas who had already sent him a bomb by courier. "We will hear about all the atrocities that happened during his rule. And I don't think it will help Gabo to have been such a friend of his."

García Márquez's defenders point to the fact that he has used his good offices with Castro to secure the freedom of a number of political prisoners in Cuba over the years, and that he does so quietly and without seeking publicity. When I pressed him, García Márquez confirmed that he had helped people leave the island, and he alluded to one "operation" that had resulted in the departure of "more than two thousand people" from Cuba. "I know just how far I can go with Fidel. Sometimes he says no. Sometimes later he comes and tells me I was right." He said that it gave him pleasure to help people, and implied that it was often just as well that they leave, from Castro's point of view. "I sometimes go to Miami," he said, "although not often, and I have stayed at the homes of people I've helped get out. Really prominent *gusanos*"—the word Castro uses for the Miami exiles—"and they call up their friends and we have big parties. Their kids ask me to sign books for them. Sometimes the people who come to see me are the same people who have denounced me. But in private they show me a different face." Enrique Santos Calderón says that "Gabo knows perfectly well what the Cuban government is, he has no illusions about that reality, but Fidel is his friend. And he has decided to live with the contradictions."

GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ has a house in Siboney, the section of Havana where rich Cubans were building their homes in the late fifties. A little farther on, the city ends abruptly, and there is a long, green, and listless countryside of sugarcane and wattle-and-daub ranchitos and thorny cattle-grazing fields. García Márquez's house, which was given to him by Castro, is one of several carefully maintained mansions with lush gardens which line a boulevard that curves up gently from the beaches and old yacht clubs. His house and those of most of his neighbors are what are called "protocol houses," homes made available to distinguished foreign guests. All the houses were seized by the government after their owners fled Cuba.

Fidel Castro himself is said to live very near García Márquez, in a house that is concealed behind a dense, high screen of trees, and up a lane where street signs and armed police tell you that you are going the wrong way. When I mentioned the mystery of Castro's residence to García Márquez, and how odd I found it that nobody in Cuba knew where the Jefe Máximo lived, he nodded and confessed that he didn't know, either. I was dumbstruck by this, because I had always assumed, like most Cubans, that he is the ultimate Castro insider. But García Márquez says that he has never even asked him, "so as not to know something that I might accidentally tell later." During our conversations, García Márquez frequently referred to his own trustworthiness in this regard. "Because he knows I am not going to betray the things he has confided in me, I am perhaps the one person Fidel can trust most in the world," he said. "And, you know, Fidel is really *desconfiado*—mistrustful. Only recently he has begun to

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PULL OVER & CALL-
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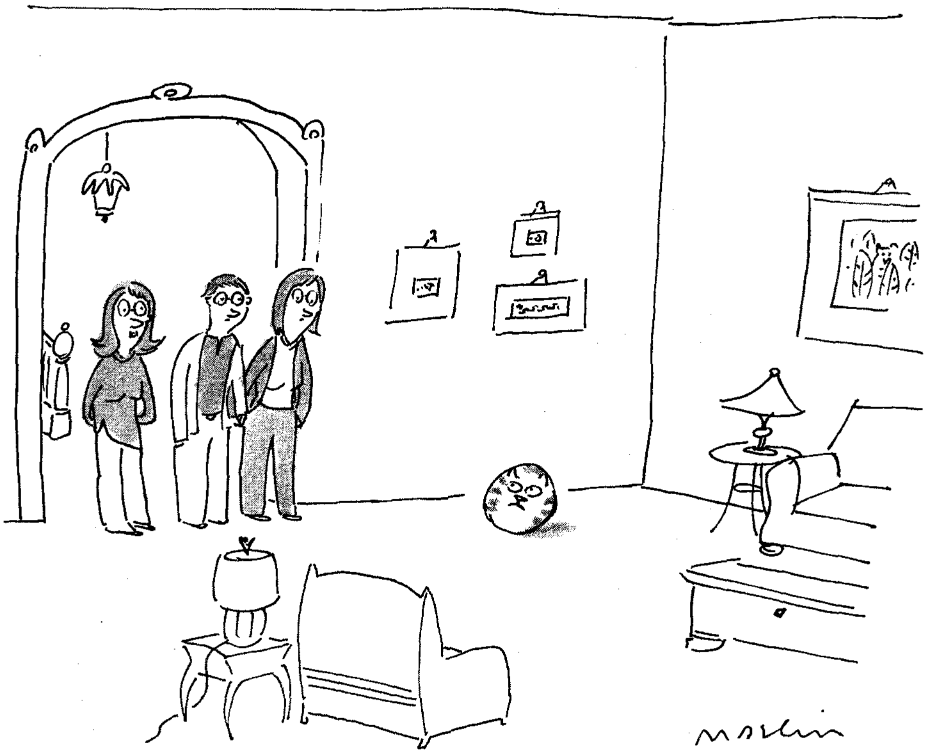
change a bit, and become less security-conscious. Sometimes now he'll call and say, 'I'm coming over' or that sort of thing. He never used to. He always imagines the telephones are bugged by the Yanquis, the C.I.A. And he is probably right to worry. He keeps his private life immensely private. He has never introduced me to his wife, for example, or even mentioned her to me. I met her once because one day in Fidel's jet she came up and introduced herself. I don't know that it is true, but people say that Fidel hasn't even introduced Raúl"—his brother—"to his wife! What is private for him is the most private of private. . . . I think I know Fidel better than a lot of people, and I consider him a real friend, but who is Fidel the private man? What is Fidel himself really like? Nobody knows."

García Márquez reminded me of a photograph taken during the Pope's visit to Cuba, in January, 1998. It was taken during the Pope's sermon in La Plaza de la Revolución, and it shows García Márquez in the front row, seated next to Castro. He was also present, he says, when Fidel heard that the three top U.S. television networks were pulling out their anchors because of breaking news about a White House intern named Monica Lewinsky. "Fidel was furious," he recalled. "He said, 'Those damned Yanquis always fuck up everything!' "

After that first high-profile appearance, García Márquez said, he decided to preserve his "independence," and stay away from public ceremonies. He watched everything on TV, and after a few days he deduced that despite outward appearances of harmony between the two leaders there must have been some "private disagreement" between them. He told Fidel that he wouldn't do the piece he was supposed to write about the visit until Fidel "confessed" to whatever it was he and the Pope had disagreed on. "Fidel's response," says García Márquez, "was to ask me to do him a favor with the Americans. He said if that turned out well he'd tell me what I wanted to know. So I did the favor—some messages—and they turned out well, but when I said 'O.K., so what happened with the Pope?' Fidel waved me off, saying, 'Oh, I'll tell you later. Anyway, it's not important the way you think.' " García Márquez shrugged. There was, he said, a handful of historical secrets that he had waited years for Fidel to tell him, but he had come to the conclusion that Fidel was going to take them with him to his grave. "And you know why?" he said. "Because Fidel isn't like the rest of us. He thinks he has all the time in the world. Death just isn't part of his plans."



"I had him declawed, de-toothed, de-whiskered, de-legged, and de-tailed."

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THE first political leader to whom García Márquez became both a friend and a confidant was General Omar Torrijos, who seized power in Panama in 1969. Torrijos was not a Marxist, but he admired Tito and Castro, and he supported the Cuban-backed guerrilla insurgencies in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. García Márquez had criticized him during an interview, and Torrijos wanted to persuade him that he was a well-intentioned leader and, above all, a Panamanian nationalist. García Márquez says that he and Torrijos became friends after their first meeting turned into a three-day drinking binge. They remained close until Torrijos's death, in a plane crash, in 1981. García Márquez lovingly describes how the moody, lonely Torrijos would stay up drinking whiskey all night, and then, when he wanted sex in the morning, would summon one of six different women he had "on permanent call." He also recalls with pride how Torrijos—who rarely read a book—had read and liked "The Autumn of the Patriarch." "He told me he thought it was my best book, and I asked him why he thought so. He leaned over to me and said, 'Because it's true; we're all like that.' "

Torrijos was also a friend of Graham Greene, and he supplied both writers with Panamanian diplomatic passports so that they could be present for the official signing of the Panama Canal Treaty in Washington in 1977. García Márquez says that both of them were on a U.S. Immigration blacklist at the time because of their Marxist affinities, and they were particularly pleased to get a twenty-one-gun salute when they got off the plane at Andrews Air Force Base—again, completely drunk. Somewhere, García Márquez told me, he still has a photograph of himself with Torrijos taken on the night of the Canal Treaty signing. It shows the two of them sitting together on the floor of the Panamanian Embassy, "totally plastered."

García Márquez's relationship with the people in power in Colombia has had its ups and downs. In 1981, when he returned to Bogotá from a trip to Cuba and Panama, he got wind of a plan to arrest him and charge him with having links to the M-19 guerrillas, a group that specialized in urban violence. He and Mercedes

"And then, in yet another stunning volte-face, the artist rediscovered the human figure."

sought asylum in the Mexican Embassy and were whisked out of the country. The flight into exile by the acclaimed author of "One Hundred Years of Solitude" became a public-relations disaster for Colombia, particularly since García Márquez was soon thereafter summoned to Paris, awarded the Légion d'Honneur by his friend President Mitterrand, and then went to Stockholm, where he received the Nobel Prize. One of the first actions of the new Colombian President, Belisario Betancur, who took office the same year, was to invite García Márquez to return home under his official protection. Betancur several times offered García Márquez senior ministerial positions and ambassadorships to Madrid and Paris, but he always refused. "He likes to be near power," Betancur observes, "but not to possess it for himself."

García Márquez denies, of course, that he has an obsession with power. "It's not my fascination with power," he said to me. "It's the fascination those who are powerful have with me. It's they who seek me out, and confide in me." When I repeated this to one of García Márquez's closest friends in Bogotá, he laughed and rolled his eyes. "Well, he would say that, but it's also true. Latin-American Presidents all want to be his friend, but he also wants to be theirs. As long as I've known him, he's always had this desire to be around power. Gabo loves Presidents. My wife likes to tease him by saying that even a vice-minister gives him a hard-on."

Many of García Márquez's newspaper and magazine articles have been anecdotal descriptions of his tête-à-têtes with the powerful, and, indeed, they are often soft or, at any rate, seem so in comparison with both his brilliantly conceived fiction and his shrewd political analyses. But García Márquez's journalism presents a problem on many fronts for his admirers. Graham Greene, for instance, once wrote that he had a penchant for getting "his facts wrong." One of García Márquez's close friends, a Colombian journalist, laughed out loud as he recalled how Gabo once wrote that Yanqui pilots who had posed as stuntmen for an air circus to get into Chile flew the planes that bombed La Moneda palace during Pinochet's overthrow of Salvador Allende. "It's the novelist in him, adjusting reality to fit his imagination," he explained.

Curiously, given that García Márquez's own journalism is so heavily influenced by his political views, *Cambio* takes no discernibly consistent editorial position. It is rather self-consciously middle of the road, with a large number of life-style features, and it has even published articles that express views that are loathsome to García Márquez. For instance, a recent editorial endorsed U.S. assistance to fight the guerrillas. *Cambio's* managing editor, Pilar Calderón, explained that she and García Márquez and the five other owner-editors want to secure a market niche with the urban middle class. "We also want to recover the tradition of storytelling," Calderón said. "We don't just want to tell the news. And, happily, Gabo is here to help us in that." The most recent article García Márquez wrote, just before he became ill, was a profile of Shakira, a twenty-two-year-old Colombian pop star.

Several of García Márquez's friends told me that he gets enormous pleasure just from spending time with young editors and reporters. They remind him of his youth, and he revels in the camaraderie and the edgy urgency of the newsroom. He is the paterfamilias, as he is in Cartagena, at his journalism foundation. The sheer joy of that seems enough, at least for the moment. "The one thing we all agree on is that we are for peace," he said to me when I pressed him about why *Cambio* was not more editorially rigorous. "The main thing is to end the war and build the country up again. Afterward, we can figure out what our views are."

ONE night late in July, I attended the forty-sixth-birthday party of a friend of mine, Darío Villamizar. He and his wife, Amparo, who is pregnant with their first child, live in an apartment on the fifth floor of a building in an old-fashioned, middle-class neighborhood that spreads for several blocks over the lower flanks of Monserrate, a steep, verdant mountain that rises above the center of Bogotá. The satirist Jaime Garzón lived in the same neighborhood, only two streets away, and before he was murdered last month he and the Villamizars often bumped into one another on the street or at the local bakery.

Darío is a lanky, soft-spoken, fairhaired man who works as a political analyst and writer. Amparo is petite and dark. She is the daughter of a prominent former Liberal Party senator, and she works for a government agency that is in charge of the "social reinsertion" of former guerrillas. Over the last decade, thousands of people who belonged to guerrilla organizations or militias have been persuaded to lay down their arms and rejoin civilian life. Darío was a member of the M-19 guerrilla group, which voluntarily disarmed in 1990. Both he and Amparo are involved in grass-roots peace and reconciliation efforts. He has never spoken to me in detail about what he did when he was a guerrilla. He says only that he was involved with "propaganda and international activities—political relations"—and that the first thing he did after the amnesty was to buy a bathrobe. "For me, it was the best way to return to normal life. I had this notion of *una bata de señor*—a gentleman's robe. The bathrobe seemed to me to be the ultimate symbol of tranquillity, an end to all the anguish. I still wear it."

The payoff for the M-19's demobilization was political legitimacy and, for a short time, real popularity as a political party. Some of its former members have become mayors, congressmen, and even senators. But, because it didn't achieve lasting power, the M-19 is considered a failure by many guerrillas who are still in the field. Nevertheless, the transition that Darío and his friends made from gun-toting revolutionaries to peace-loving middle-class professionals is one of the few success stories in Colombia's recent history.

The party was an intimate affair. A dozen middle-aged men and women, most of them also former members of the M-19, gathered in the Villamizars' small living room, which is decorated with Colombian, Nicaraguan, and Cuban contemporary art. At one point, Darío leaned over to me and whispered, "Practically the entire surviving *comando superior*—the directorate—of the M-19 is in this room tonight." Vera Grabe, who was the only woman among the leaders of the group, was immediately identifiable because of her frizzy reddish-blond hair. Otty Patiño, one of the founders of M-19, has gone bald and is much fatter than he was as a guerrilla. The guests sat on chairs that were pressed together in the little room, drinking Cuban *añejo* rum and Tennessee bourbon, and getting more and more animated as the night wore on. One former guerrilla told the story of how the *comando superior* had posed as nuns and priests and convinced the keepers of a rural monastery that they were there to have a "spiritual retreat," when in fact they were conducting a planning session. The man, who was pretty drunk, giggled and peppered his story with the expletive *hijoeputa*—son of a whore—every few seconds, and the other guests laughed with pleasure, as if they were characters in "The Big Chill," recalling their youth.

Unlike FARC, which has traditionally represented the rural peasantry, the M-19 drew many of its recruits from university students and the urban middle class. It specialized in dramatic actions, like the theft in 1974 of Simón Bolívar's sword from a museum in Bogotá, and gained international notoriety in 1980 when it held a group of ambassadors hostage for sixty-one days in the embassy of the Dominican Republic. In 1985, during an impasse in negotiations with the government of President Belisario Betancur, M-19 guerrillas seized the Palace of Justice and held the entire Colombian Supreme Court hostage. The Army responded by destroying the building. More than a hundred people were killed, including eleven justices and thirty-five guerrillas. Hundreds more of the M-19's members were killed by right-wing death squads over the next few years.

The situation today is more complex than it was in 1990. There are more people fighting, and with better equipment. More blood has been shed, and more is at stake. Darío is guardedly optimistic about the chances for a renewal of Pastrana's peace process, but he also fears that there will be more war. The increased aid from the United States has made the Army feel triumphant for the first time in years, and it is going to want more military victories, which it can achieve with the new Super Hueys and high-tech weaponry and advisers. On the other hand, beefing up the Army could force the guerrillas to reconsider their options and make them more inclined to negotiate with the government. That is the optimistic—perhaps overly so—view.

Gabriel García Márquez has been absent from the dialogue about the war for several weeks now. In August, he quietly left Colombia for his home in Mexico, and then went to Los Angeles, where his son Rodrigo lives and works, and where he was briefly hospitalized and treated. He has returned to Mexico City, which his brother Jaime says is "a better emotional climate" for his recuperation. Darío says that he and many other Colombians feel his absence strongly. "Right now we need someone with great moral and spiritual authority," he told me on the phone from Bogotá in mid-September. "Gabo is the one person who could go out and stand between the two sides shooting at one another and say 'No more,' and everyone would listen. If he could play that role, it would be a tremendous thing for Colombia." ♦

"According to our time-and-motion studies, you handle your time very well but a lot of your motion is wasted."

POPULAR CHRONICLES

MEET THE SHAGGS

Three girls from New Hampshire who became one of music's strangest legends.

BY SUSAN ORLEAN

THINGS I WONDER (2:12)

Depending on whom you ask, the Shaggs were either the best band of all time or the worst. Frank Zappa is said to have proclaimed that the Shaggs were "better than the Beatles." More recently, though, a music fan who claimed to be in "the fetal position, writhing in pain," declared on the Internet that the Shaggs were "hauntingly bad," and added, "I would walk across the desert while eating charcoal briquettes soaked in Tabasco for forty days and forty nights *not* to ever have to listen to anything Shagg-related *ever* again." Such a divergence of opinion confuses the mind. Listening to the Shaggs' album "Philosophy of the World" will further confound. The music is winsome but raggedly discordant pop. Something is sort of wrong with the tempo, and the melodies are squashed and bent, nasal, deadpan. Are the Shaggs referencing the heptatonic, angular microtones of Chinese *ya-yueh* court music and the atonal note clusters of Ornette Coleman, or are they just a bunch of kids playing badly on cheap, out-of-tune guitars? And what about their homely, blunt lyrics? Consider the song "Things I Wonder":

There are many things I wonder
There are many things I don't
It seems as though the things I wonder
most
Are the things I never find out

Is this the colloquial ease and dislocated syntax of a James Schuyler poem or the awkward innermost thoughts of a speechless teen-ager?

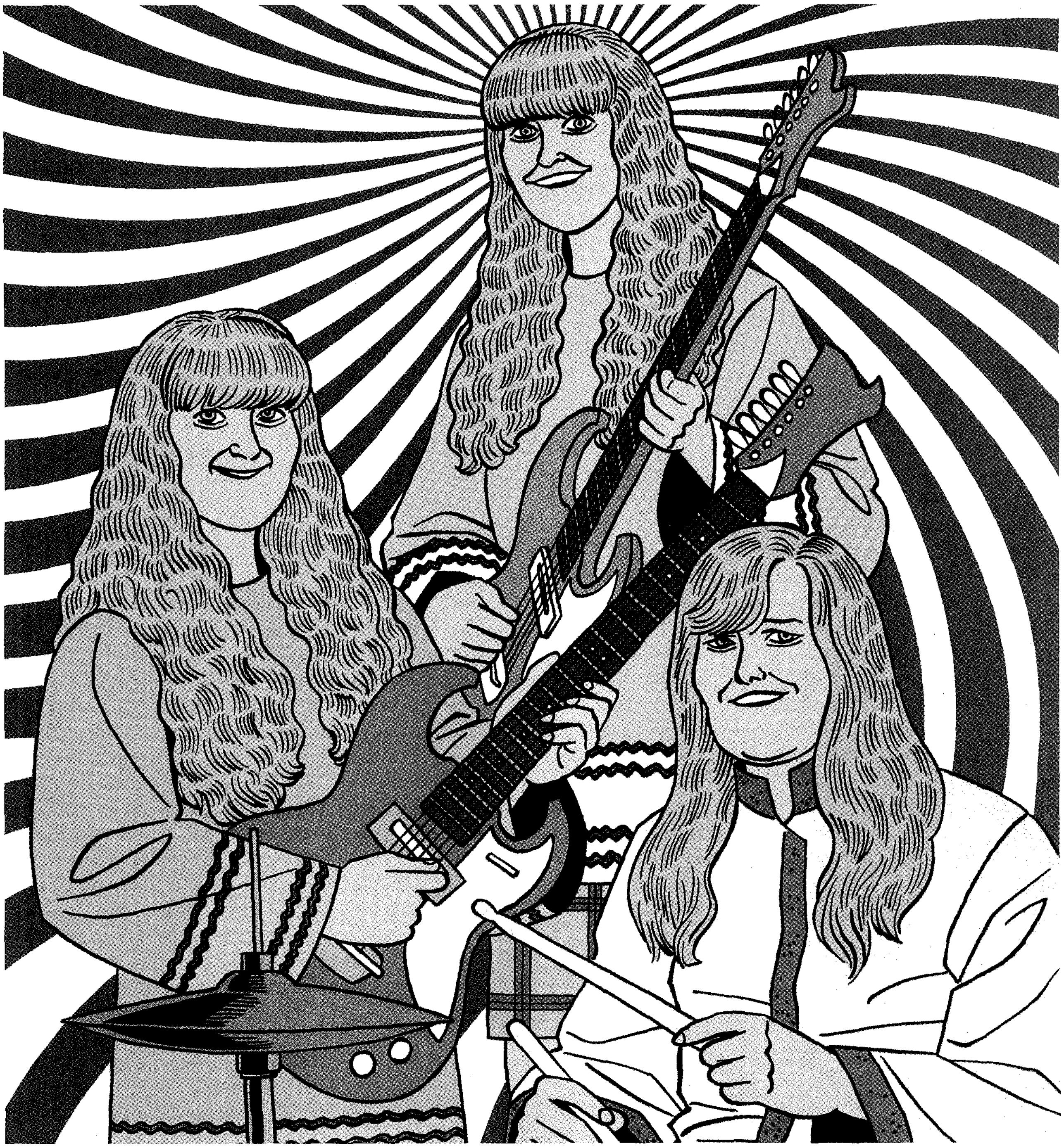
The Shaggs were three sisters, Helen, Betty, and Dorothy (Dot) Wiggin, from Fremont, New Hampshire. They were managed by their father, Austin Wiggin, Jr., and were sometimes accompanied by another sister, Rachel. They performed almost exclusively at the Fremont town hall and at a local nursing home, beginning in 1968 and ending in 1973. Many people in Fremont thought the band stank. Austin Wiggin did not. He believed his girls were going to be big stars, and in 1969 he took most of his savings and paid to record an album of their music. Nine hundred of the original thousand copies of "Philosophy of the World" vanished right after being pressed, along with the record's shady producer. Even so, the album has endured for thirty years. Music collectors got hold of the remaining copies of "Philosophy of the World" and started a small Shaggs cult. In the mid-seventies, WBCN-FM, in Boston, began playing a few cuts from the record. In 1988, the songs were repackaged and rereleased on compact disk and became celebrated by outsider-music mavens, who were taken with the Shaggs' artless style. Now the Shaggs are entering their third life: "Philosophy of the World" was reissued last spring by RCA Victor and will be released in Germany this winter. The new CD of "Philosophy of the World" has the same cover as the original 1969 album—a photograph of the Wiggin girls posed in front of a dark-green curtain. In the picture, Helen is twenty-two, Dot is twenty-one, and Betty is eighteen. They have long blond hair and long blond bangs and stiff, quizzical half-smiles. Helen, sitting behind her drum set, is wearing flowered trousers and a white Nehru shirt; Betty and Dot, clutching their guitars, are wearing matching floral tunics, pleated plaid skirts, and square-heeled white pumps. There is nothing playful about the picture; it is melancholy, foreboding, with black shadows and the queer, depthless quality of an aquarium. Which leaves you with even more things to wonder about the Shaggs.

SHAGGS' OWN THING (3:54)

Fremont, New Hampshire, is a town that has missed out on most everything. Route 125, the main highway bisecting New Hampshire, just misses the east side of Fremont; Route 101 just misses the north; the town is neither in the mountains nor on the ocean; it is not quite in the thick of Boston's outskirts, nor is it quite cosseted in the woods. Fremont is a drowsy, trim, unfancy place, rimmed by the Exeter River. Ostentation is expressed only in a few man-size gravestones in the Fremont cemetery; bragging rights are limited to Fremont's being the home town of the eminent but obscure nineteen-twenties meteorologist Herbert Browne and its being the first place a B-52 ever crashed without killing anyone.

In the nineteen-sixties, when the Wiggin sisters formed the Shaggs, many people in Fremont raised dairy cows or made handkerchiefs at the Exeter textile mill or built barrels at Spaulding & Frost Cooperage, went to church, tended their families, kept quiet lives. Sometimes the summer light bounces off the black-glass surface of the Exeter River and glazes the big stands of blue pine, and sometimes the pastures are full and lustrous, but ordinary days in southern New Hampshire towns can be mingy and dismal. "Loneliness contributed to severe depression, illness and drunkenness for countless rural families," Matthew Thomas wrote, in his book "History of Fremont, N. H. Olde Poplin: An Independent New England Republic 1764-1997," which came out last year. "There may have been some nice, pleasant times . . . but for the most part, death, sickness, disease, accidents, bad weather, loneliness, strenuous hard work, insect-infested foods, prowling predatory animals, and countless inconveniences marked day-to-day existence."

When I was in Fremont recently, I asked Matthew Thomas, who is forty-three and the town historian, what it had been like growing up there. He said it was nice but that he had been bored stiff. For entertainment, there were square



Thirty years later, the Shaggs may yet make it big, with the rerelease of their homespun album, "Philosophy of the World."

dances, sledding, an annual carnival with a Beano tent, Vic Marcotte's Barber Shop and Poolroom. (These days, there are weekend grass drags out near Phil Peterson's farm, where the pasture is flat and firm enough to race snowmobiles in the summer.) When the Shaggs were growing up, there were ham-and-bean suppers, boxing matches, dog shows, and spelling bees at the town hall. The hall is an unadorned box of a building, but its performance hall is actually quite grand. It isn't used anymore, and someone has made off with the red velvet curtain, but it still has a sombre dark stage and high-backed chairs, and the gravid air of a place where things might happen. In a quiet community like Fremont, in the dull hours between barn dances, a stage like that might give you big ideas.

WHO ARE PARENTS? (2:58)

WHERE else would Austin Wiggin have got the idea that his daughters should form a rock band? Neither he nor his wife, Annie, was musical; she much preferred television to music, and he, at most, fooled around with a Jew's harp. He wasn't a showoff, dying to be noticed—by all accounts he was an ornery loner who had little to do with other people in town. He was strict and old-fashioned, not a hippie manqué, not a rebel, very disapproving of long hair and short skirts. He was from a poor family and was raising a poor family—seven kids on a mill hand's salary—and music lessons and instruments for the girls were a daunting expense.

And yet the Shaggs were definitely his idea—or, more exactly, his mother's idea. Austin was terribly superstitious. His mother liked to tell fortunes. When he was young, she studied his palm and told him that in the future he would marry a strawberry blonde and would have two sons whom she would not live to see, and that his daughters would play in a band. Her auguries were borne out. Annie was a strawberry blonde, and she and Austin did have two sons after his mother died. It was left to Austin to fulfill the last of his mother's predictions, and when his daughters were old enough he told them they would be taking voice and music lessons and forming a band. There was no debate: his word was law, and his mother's prophecies were gospel. Besides, he chafed at his place in the Fremont social system. It wasn't so much that his girls would make him rich and raise him out of a mill hand's dreary métier; it was that they would prove that the Wiggin kids were not only different from but better than the folks in town.

The girls liked music—particularly Herman's Hermits, Ricky Nelson, and Dino, Desi & Billy—but until Austin foretold their futures they had not planned to become rock stars. They were shy, small-town teen-agers who dreamed of growing up and getting married, having children, maybe becoming secretaries someday. Even now, they don't remember ever having dreamed of fame or of making music. But Austin pushed the girls into a new life. He named them the Shaggs, and told them that they were not going to attend the local high school, because he didn't want them travelling by bus and mixing with outsiders, and, more important, he wanted them to practice their music all day. He enrolled them in a Chicago mail-order outfit called American Home School, but he designed their schedule himself: practice in the morning and afternoon, rehearse songs for him after dinner, and then do calisthenics and jumping jacks and leg lifts or practice for another hour before going to bed. The girls couldn't decide which was worse, the days when he made them do calisthenics or the days when he'd make them practice again before bed. In either case, their days seemed endless. The rehearsals were solemn, and Austin could be cutting. One song in particular, "Philosophy of the World," he claimed they never played right, and he would insist on hearing it again and again.

The Shaggs were not leading rock-and-roll lives. Austin forbade the girls to date before they were eighteen and discouraged most other friendships. They hadn't been popular kids, anyway—they didn't have the looks or the money or the savvy for it—but being in the band, and being home-schooled, set them apart even more. Friday nights, the family went out together to do grocery shopping. Sundays they went to church, and the girls practiced when they got home. Their world was even smaller than the small town of Fremont.

This was 1965. The Beatles had recently débuted on American television. The harmony between generations—at least, the harmony between the popular cultures of those generations—was busting. And yet the sweet, lumpish Wiggin sisters of Fremont, New Hampshire, were playing pop music at their father's insistence, in a band that he directed. Rebellion might have been driving most rock and roll, but in Fremont Dot Wiggin was writing tributes to her mom and dad, with songs like "Who Are Parents?":

Parents are the ones who really care
Who are parents?
Parents are the ones who are always there
Some kids think their parents are cruel
Just because they want them to obey certain rules . . . .
Parents do understand
Parents do care

Their first public performance was at a talent show in nearby Exeter, in 1968. The girls could barely play their instruments. They didn't think they were ready to appear in public, but Austin thought otherwise. When they opened, with a cover of a loping country song called "Wheels," people in the audience threw soda cans at them and jeered. The girls were mortified; Austin told them they just had to go home and practice more. If they thought about quitting, they thought about it very privately, because Austin would have had no truck with the idea; he was the kind of father who didn't tolerate debate. They practiced more, did their calisthenics, practiced more. Dot wrote the songs and the basic melodies, and she and Betty worked together on the chords and rhythms. Helen made up her drum parts on her own. The songs were misshapen pop tunes, full of shifting time signatures and odd metres and abrupt key changes, with lyrics about Dot's lost cat, Foot Foot, and her yearning for a sports car and how much she liked to listen to the radio.

On Halloween, the Shaggs played at a local nursing home—featuring Dot's song "It's Halloween" in their set—and got a polite response from the residents. Soon afterward, Austin arranged for them to play at the Fremont town hall on Saturday nights. The girls worried about embarrassing themselves, but at the same time they liked the fact that the shows allowed them to escape the house and their bounded world, even if

"Remember that, honey? Serious testosterone!"

it was just for a night. At that point, the girls had never even been to Boston, which was only fifty miles away.

The whole family took part in the town-hall shows. Austin III, the older of the two sons who had been seen in Austin's future, played the maracas; the other son, Robert, played the tambourine and did a drum solo during intermission; Annie sold tickets and ran the refreshment stand. A Pepsi truck would drop off the cases of soda at their green ranch house, on Beede Road, every Friday night. Even though, according to one town-hall regular, most people found the Shaggs' music "painful and torturous," sometimes as many as a hundred kids showed up at the dances—practically the whole adolescent population of Fremont. Then again, there really wasn't much else to do in Fremont on a Saturday night. The audience danced and chatted, heckled the band, pelted the girls with junk, ignored them, grudgingly appreciated them, mocked them.

The rumor around town was that Austin forced his daughters to be in the band. There was even talk that he was inappropriately intimate with them. When asked about it years later, Betty said that the talk wasn't true, but Helen said that Austin once was intimate with her. Certainly, the family was folded in on itself; even Austin's father and Annie's mother, after they were both widowed, became romantically involved and lived together in a small house on the Wiggin property. The gossip and criticism only made Austin more determined to continue with the band. It was, after all, his destiny.

I'M SO HAPPY WHEN YOU'RE NEAR (2:12)

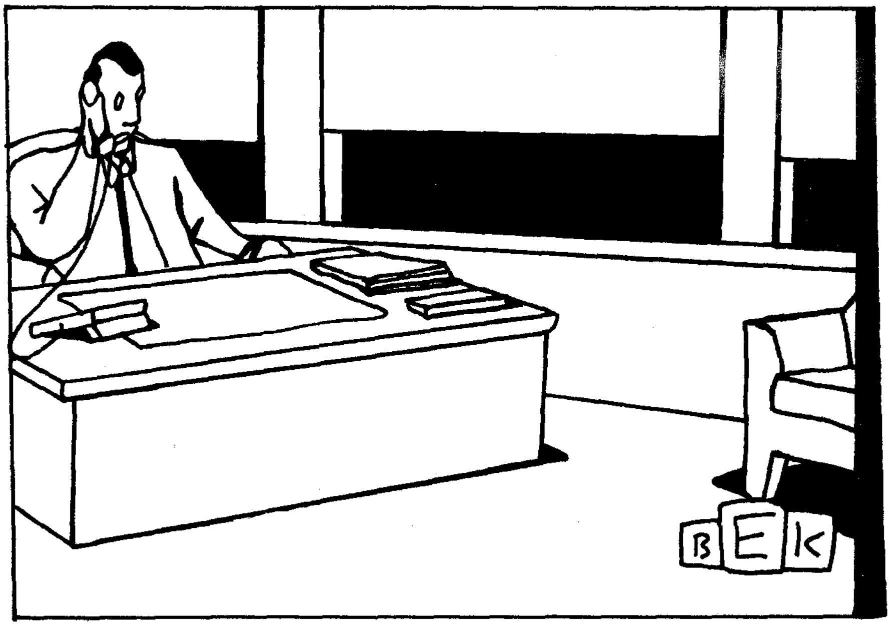
"THROUGH the years, this author as town historian has received numerous requests from fans around the country looking for information on 'The Shaggs' and the town they came from," Matthew Thomas wrote in his section about the band. "They definitely have a cult following, and deservedly so, because the Wiggin sisters worked hard and with humble resources to gain respect and acceptance as musicians. To their surprise they succeeded. After all, what other New Hampshire band...has a record album worth $300-$500?"

The Beatles' arrival in America piqued Austin. He disliked their moppy hair but was stirred by their success. If they could make it, why couldn't his girls? He wanted to see the Shaggs on television, and on concert tours. Things weren't happening quickly enough for him, though, and this made him unhappy. He started making tapes and home movies of the town-hall shows. In March, 1969, he took the girls to Fleetwood Studios, outside Boston, to make a record. According to the magazine *Cool and Strange Music!*, the studio engineer listened to the Shaggs rehearse and suggested that they weren't quite ready to record. But Austin insisted on going forward, reportedly telling the engineer, "I want to get them while they're hot." In the album's liner notes, Austin wrote:

> The Shaggs are real, pure, unaffected by outside influences. Their music is different, it is theirs alone. They believe in it, live it.... Of all contemporary acts in the world today, perhaps only the Shaggs do what others would like to do, and that is perform only what they believe in, what they feel, not what others think the Shaggs should feel. The Shaggs love you.... They will not change their music or style to meet the whims of a frustrated world. You should appreciate this because you know they are pure what more can you ask?.... They are sisters and members of a large family where mutual respect and love for each other is at an unbelievable high . . . in an atmosphere which has encouraged them to develop their music unaffected by outside influences. They are happy people and love what they are doing. They do it because they love it.

The Wiggins returned to Fleetwood a few years later. By then, the girls were more proficient—they had practiced hundreds of hours since the first recording session—but their playing still inspired the engineer to write, "As the day progressed, I overcame my disappointment and started feeling sorry for this family paying $60 an hour for studio time to record—this?"

I once asked Annie Wiggin if she thought Austin was a dreamer, and after sitting quietly for a few moments she said, "Well, probably. Must have been." If he was, it no doubt got harder to dream as the years went on. In 1973, the Fremont town supervisors decided to end the Saturday-night concerts, because—well, no one really remembers why anymore, but there was talk of fights breaking out and drugs circulating in the crowd, and wear and tear on the town hall's wooden floors, although the girls scrubbed the scuff marks off every Sunday. Austin was furious, but the girls were relieved to end the grind of playing every Saturday night. They were getting older and had begun to chafe at his authority. Helen secretly married the first boyfriend she ever had—someone she had met at the dances. She continued living at home for three months after the wedding because she was too terrified to tell Austin what she had done. On the night that she finally screwed up the courage to give him the news, he got out a shotgun and



"As far as I'm concerned, it just takes my kind."

• •

"Good news, Mrs. Bryant—I think we got it all."

• •

went after her husband. The police joined in and told Helen to choose one man or the other. She left with her husband, and it was months before Austin spoke to her. She was twenty-eight years old.

The Shaggs continued to play at local fairs and at the nursing home. Austin still believed they were going to make it, and the band never broke up. It just shut down in 1975, on the day Austin, who was only forty-seven years old, died in bed of a massive heart attack—the same day, according to Helen, they had finally played a version of "Philosophy of the World" that he praised.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE WORLD (2:56)

SHORTLY after the newest rerelease of the Shaggs' album, I went to New Hampshire to talk to the Wiggin sisters. A few years after Austin died, Betty and Dot married and moved to their own houses, and eventually Annie sold the house on Beede Road and moved to an apartment nearby. After a while, the house's new owner complained to people in town that Austin's ghost haunted the property. As soon as he could afford it, the new owner built something bigger and nicer farther back on the property, and allowed the Fremont Fire Department to burn the old Wiggin house down for fire-fighting practice.

Dot and Betty live a few miles down the road from Fremont, in the town of Epping, and Helen lives a few miles farther, in Exeter. They don't play music anymore. After Austin died, they sold much of their equipment and later let their kids horse around with whatever was left. Dot hung on to her guitar for a while, just in case, but a few years ago she lent it to one of her brothers and hasn't got it back. Dot, who is now fifty, cleans houses for a living. Betty, forty-eight, was a school janitor until recently, when she took a better job, in the stockroom of a kitchen-goods warehouse. Helen, who suffers from serious depression, lives on disability.

Dot and Betty arranged to meet me at Dunkin' Donuts, in Epping, and I went early so that I could read the local papers. It was a soggy, warm morning in southern New Hampshire; the sky was pearly, and the sun was as gray as gunmetal. Long tractor-trailers idled in the Dunkin' Donuts parking lot and then rumbled to life and lumbered onto the road. A few people were lined up to buy Pick 4 lottery tickets. The clerk behind the doughnut counter was discussing her wedding shower with a girl wearing a fuzzy halter top and platform sneakers. In the meantime, the coffee burned.

That day's Exeter *News-Letter* reported that the recreation commission's kickoff concert would feature Beatle Juice, a Beatles tribute band led by "Brad Delp, former front man of 'Boston,' one of the biggest rock bands New England has ever produced." Southern New Hampshire has regular outbreaks of tribute bands and reunion tours, as if it were in a time zone all its own, one in which the past keeps reappearing, familiar but essentially changed. Some time ago, Dot and her husband and their two sons went to see a revived version of Herman's Hermits. The concert was a huge disappointment for Dot, because her favorite Hermit, Peter (Herman) Noone, is no longer with the band, and because the Hermits' act now includes dirty jokes and crude references.

The Shaggs never made any money from their album until years later, when members of the band NRBQ heard "Philosophy of the World" and were thrilled by its strange innocence. NRBQ's own record label, Red Rooster, released records by such idiosyncratic bands as Jake & the Family Jewels, and they asked the Wiggins if they could compile a selection of songs from the group's two recording sessions. The resulting album, "The Shaggs' Own Thing," includes the second session at Fleetwood Studios and some live and home recordings. Red Rooster's reissue of "Philosophy of the World" was reviewed in *Rolling Stone* twice in 1980 and was described as "priceless and timeless." The articles introduced the Shaggs to the world.

Three years ago, Irwin Chusid, the author of the forthcoming book "Songs in the Key of Z: The Curious Universe of Outsider Music," discovered that a company he worked with had bought the rights to the Shaggs' songs, which had been bundled with other obscure music-publishing rights. Chusid wanted to reissue "Philosophy of the World" as it was in 1969, with the original cover and the original song sequence. He suggested the project to Joe Mozian, a vice-president of marketing at RCA Victor, who had never heard the band. Mozian was interested in unusual ventures; he had just released some Belgian lounge music from the sixties, which featured such songs as "The Frère Jacques Conga." Mozian says, "The Shaggs were beyond my wildest dreams. I couldn't comprehend that music like that existed. It's so basic and innocent, the way the music business used to be. Their timing, musically, was . . . fascinating. Their lyrics were . . . amazing. It is kind of a bad record—that's so obvious, it's a given. But it absolutely intrigued me, the idea that people would make a record playing the way they do."

The new "Philosophy of the World" was released last March. Even though the record is being played on college radio stations and the reviews have been enthusiastic and outsider art has been in vogue for several years, RCA Victor has sold only a few thousand copies of "Philosophy" so far. Mozian admits that he is disappointed. "I'm not sure why it hasn't sold," he says. "I think people are a little afraid of having the Shaggs in their record collections."

While I was waiting for the Wiggins, I went out to my car to listen to the CD again. I especially love the song "Philosophy of the World," with its wrought-up, clattering guitars and chugging, cockeyed rhythm and the cheerfully pessimistic lyrics about how people are never happy with what they have. I was right in the middle of the verse about how rich people want what poor people have, and how girls with long hair want short hair, when Betty pulled up and opened the door of my car. As soon as she recognized the song, she gasped, "Do you like this?" I said yes, and she said, "God, it's horrible." She shook her head. Her hair no longer rippled down to her waist and no longer had a shelf of shaggy bangs that touched the bridge of her nose; it was short and springy, just to the nape of her neck, the hair of a grown woman without time to bother too much about her appearance.

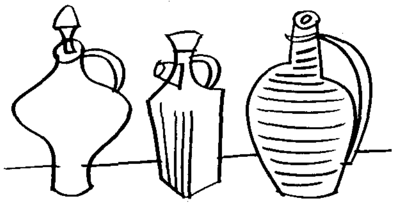
A few minutes later, Dot drove in. She was wearing a flowered housedress and a Rugrats watch, and had a thin silver band on her thumb. On her middle finger was a chunky ring that spelled "Elvis" in block letters. She and Betty have the same deep-blue eyes and thrusting chin and tiny teeth, but Dot's hair is still long and wavy, and even now you can picture her as the girl with a guitar on the cover of the 1969 album. She asked what we were listening to. "What do you think?" Betty said to her. "The *Shaggs*." They both listened for another minute, so rapt that it seemed as if they had never heard the song before. "I never play the record on my own anymore," Dot said. "My son Matt plays it sometimes. He likes it. I don't think I get sentimental when I hear it—I just don't think about playing it."

"I wonder where I put my copies of the album," Betty said. "I know I have one copy of the CD. I think I have some of the albums somewhere."

The Wiggins have received fan letters from Switzerland and Texas, been interviewed for a documentary film, and inspired a dozen Web sites, bulletin boards, and forums on the Internet, but it's hard to see how this could matter much, once their childhood had been scratched out and rewritten as endless days of practicing guitar, and their father, who believed that their success was fated, died before they got any recognition. They are wise enough to realize that some of the long-standing interest in their music is ironic—sheer marvel that anything so unpolished could ever have made it onto a record. "We might have felt special at the time we made the record," Dot said uncertainly. "The really cool part, to me, is that it's thirty years later and we're still talking about it. I never thought we'd really be famous. I never thought we'd even be as famous as we are. I met a girl at the Shop-'n Save the other day who used to come to the dances, and she said she wanted to go out now and buy the CD. And I saw a guy at a fair recently and talked to him for about half an hour about the Shaggs. And people call and ask if they can come up and meet us—that's amazing to me."

Yet, when I asked Dot and Betty for the names of people who could describe the town-hall shows, they couldn't think of any for days. "We missed out on a lot," Betty said. "I can't say we didn't have fun, but we missed a social life, we missed out on having friends, we missed everything except our music and our exercises. I just didn't think we were good enough to be playing in concerts and making records. At one point, I thought maybe we would make it, but it wasn't really my fantasy." Her fantasy, she said, was to climb into a car with plenty of gas and just drive—not to get anywhere in particular, just to go.

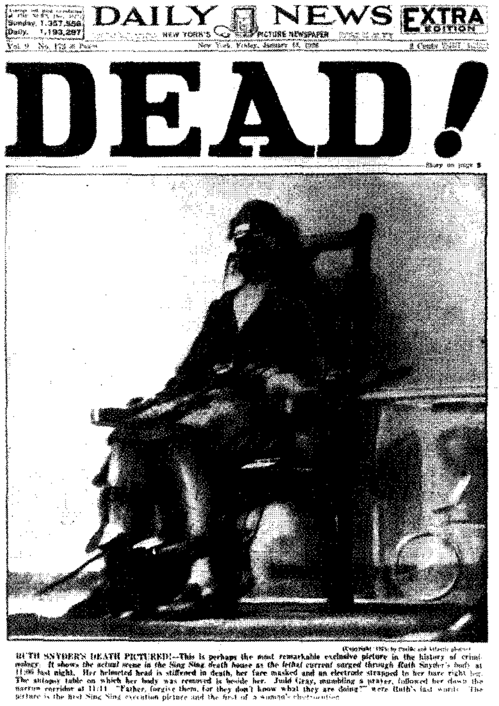
We ordered our coffee and doughnuts and sat at a table near the window. Betty had her two-year-old and eight-month-old granddaughters, Makayla and Kelsey, with her, and Makayla had squirmed away from the table and was playing with a plastic sign that read "Caution Wet Floor." Betty often takes care of her grandchildren for her son and her daughter-in-law. Things are tight. The little windfall from their recordings helps, especially since Dot's husband is in poor health and can't work, and Betty's husband was killed in a motorcycle accident six years ago, and Helen is unable to work because of her depression.



For the Wiggins, music was never simple and carefree, and it still isn't. Helen doesn't go out much, so I spoke with her on the phone, and she told me that she hadn't played music since her father died but that country-and-Western echoed in her head all the time, maddeningly so, and so loud that it made it hard for her to talk. When I asked Betty if she still liked music, she thought for a moment and then said that her husband's death had drawn her to country music. Whenever she feels bereft, she sings brokenhearted songs along with the radio. Just then, Makayla began hollering. Betty shushed her and said, "She really does have some kind of voice." A look flickered across her face. "I think, well, maybe she'll take voice lessons someday."

Dot is the only one who is still attached to her father's dream. She played the handbells in her church choir until recently, when she began taking care of one of Helen's children in addition to her own two sons and no longer had the time. She said that she's been writing lyrics for the last two years and hopes to finish them, and to compose the music for them. In the meantime, Terry Adams, of NRBQ, says he has enough material left from the Fleetwood Studio recording sessions for a few more CDs, and he has films of the town-hall concerts that he plans to synchronize with sound. The Shaggs, thirty years late, may yet make it big, the way Austin saw it in his dreams. But even that might not have been enough to sate him. The Shaggs must have known this all along. In "Philosophy of the World," the song they never could play to his satisfaction, they sang:

It doesn't matter what you do
It doesn't matter what you say
There will always be one who wants
    things the opposite way
We do our best, we try to please
But we're like the rest we're never at ease
You can never please
Anybody
In this world ♦



Sunday, 1,357,556
Daily, 1,193,297

DAILY NEWS EXTRA EDITION

NEW YORK'S PICTURE NEWSPAPER

New York, Friday, January 13, 1928

DEAD!

(Copyright: 1928: by Pacific and Atlantic Photos)

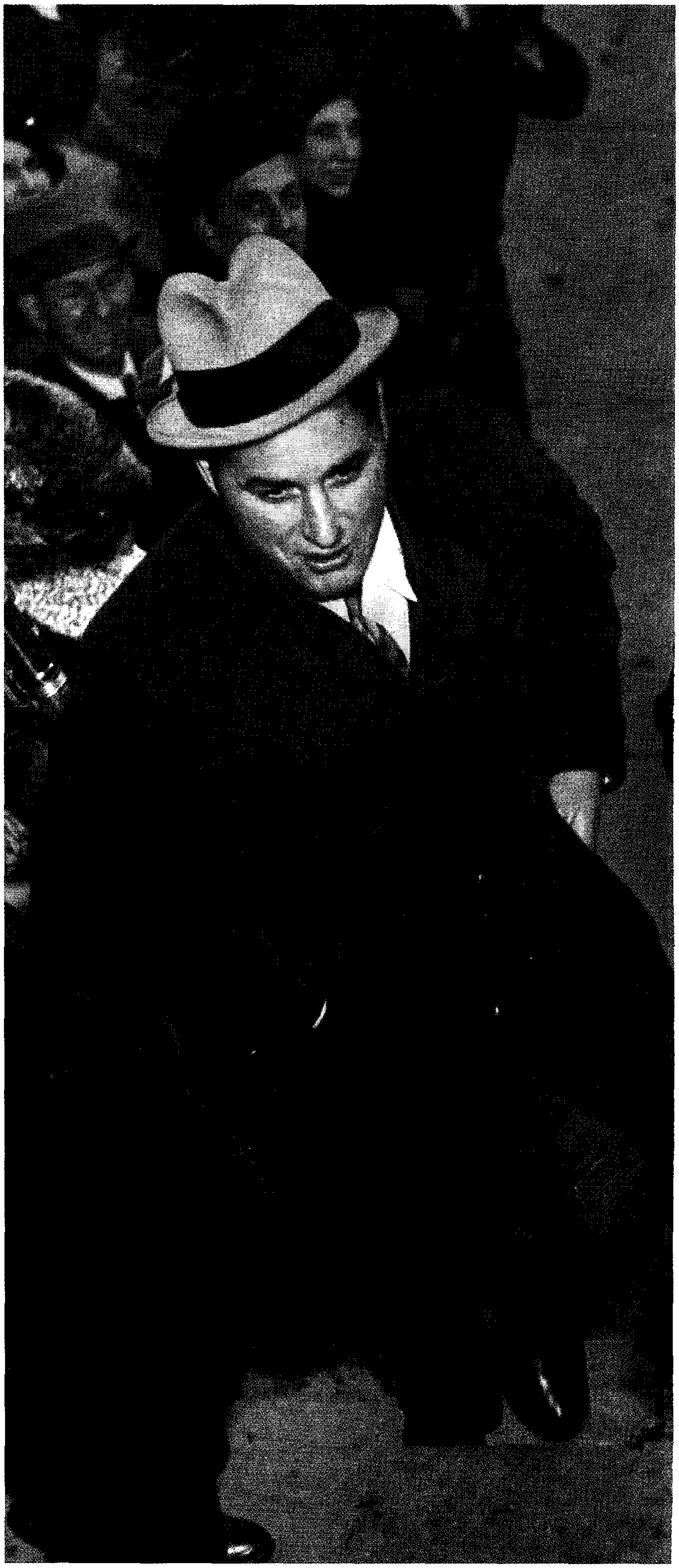
RUTH SNYDER'S DEATH PICTURED!—This is perhaps the most remarkable exclusive picture in the history of criminology. It shows the actual scene in the Sing Sing death house as the lethal current surged through Ruth Snyder's body at 11:06 last night. Her helmeted head is stiffened in death, her face masked and an electrode strapped to her bare right leg. The autopsy table on which her body was removed is beside her. Judd Gray, mumbling a prayer, followed her down the narrow corridor at 11:14. "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing!" were Ruth's last words. The picture is the first Sing Sing execution picture and the first of a woman's electrocution.

METRO RETRO

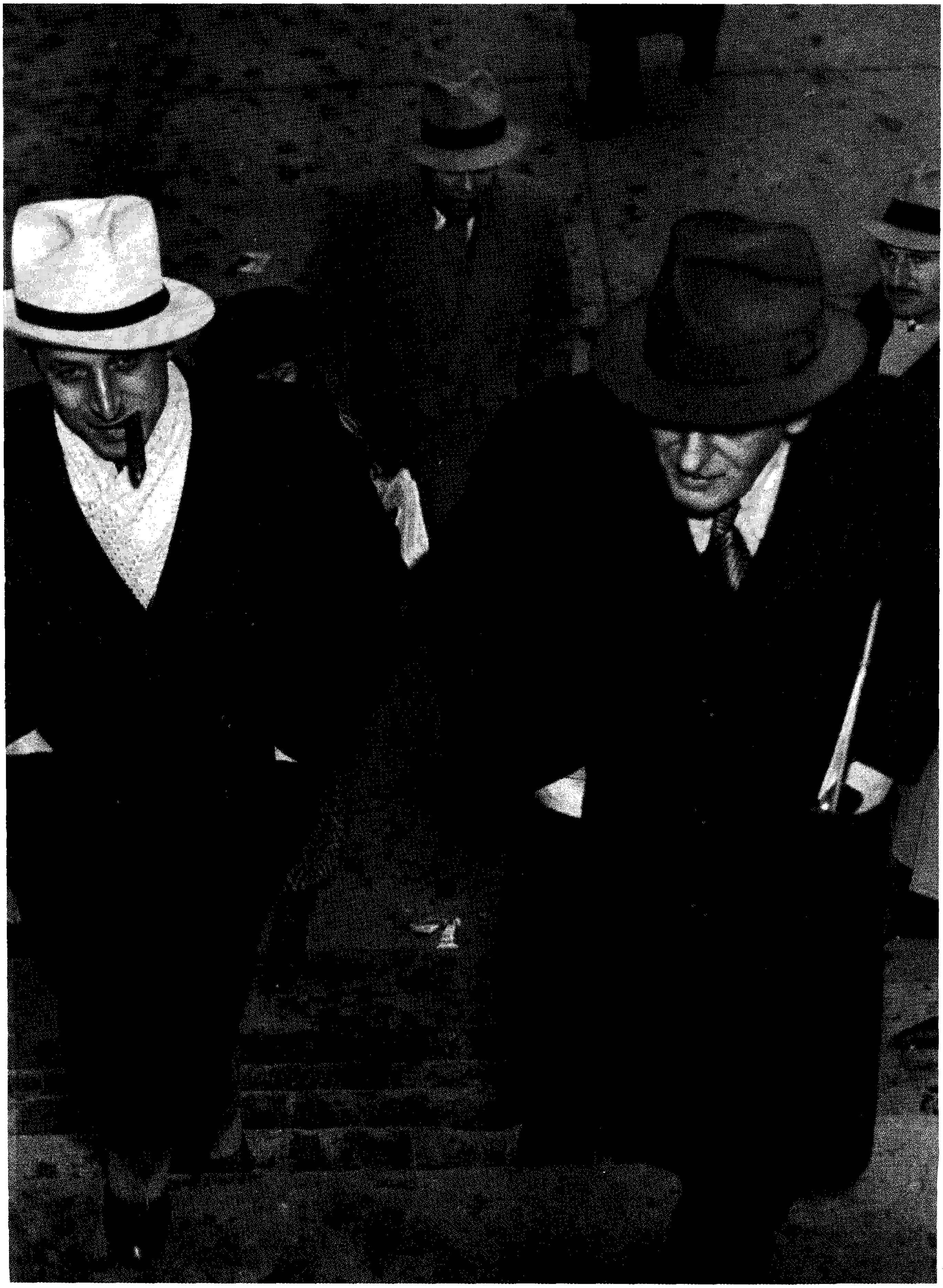
When mayhem was in style.

A QUEENS VILLAGE housewife named Ruth Snyder achieved tabloid immortality: she became the first woman in New York to be executed in what the reporters of my youth still called "the hot squat." Her crime: breaking her husband's head with a sash weight. A photograph of the execution was taken at Sing Sing on January 12, 1928, by Tom Howard, who had a miniature camera strapped to his ankle. A wire ran up his leg from the camera to a shutter release, in his jacket pocket. At 11:06 P.M., as Snyder was hit with thousands of volts, Howard lifted his left trouser leg and clicked.

The next day, the photograph appeared on page 1 of the *Daily News* under the headline "DEAD!" It did not matter that it was out of focus; the shuddering blur made the image universal. Over the past seventy years, that front page has been reproduced hundreds of times; today a blowup hangs proudly among several dozen other great *Daily News*



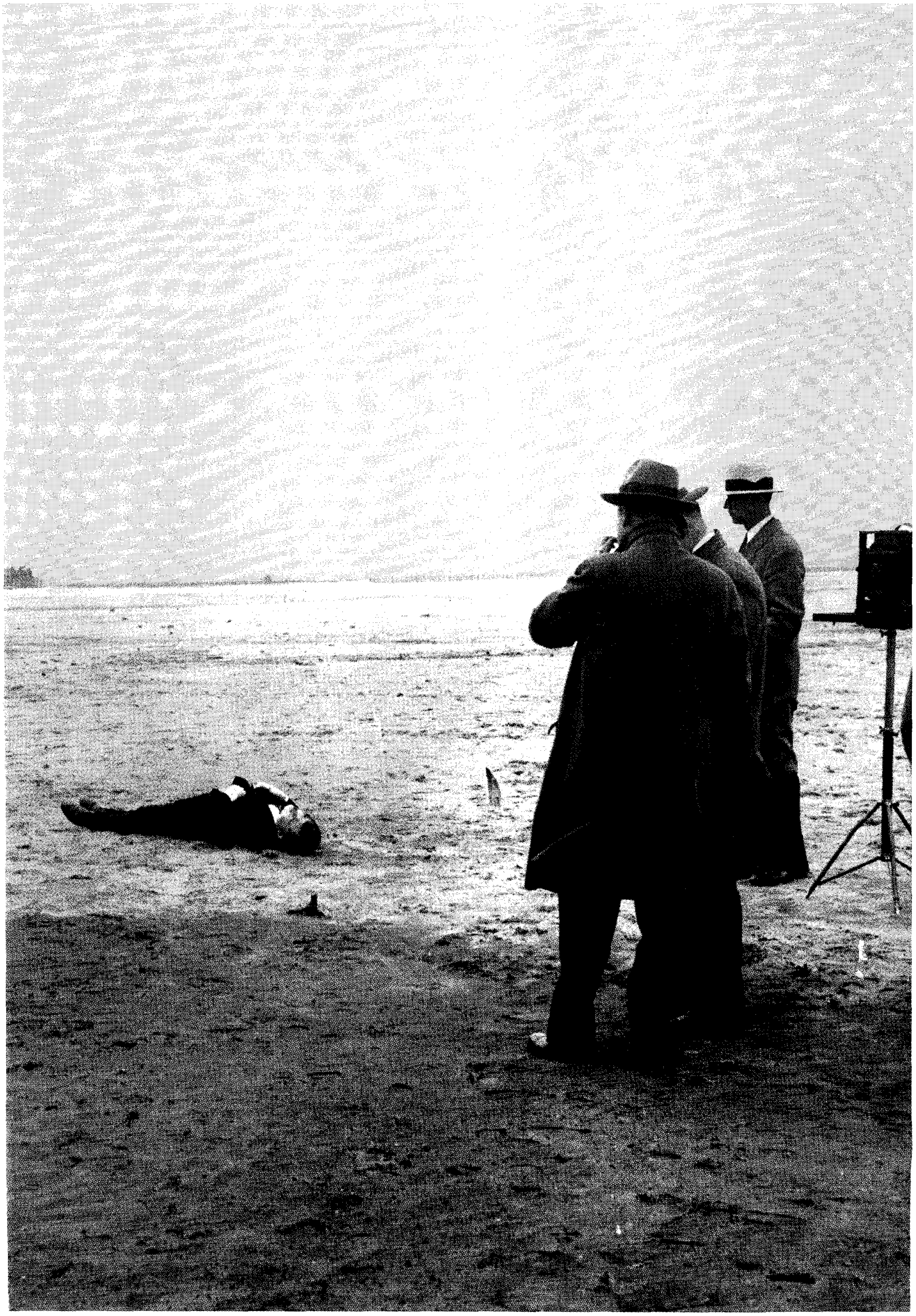
"Dapper Attorney General": The man in the middle is David T. Wil

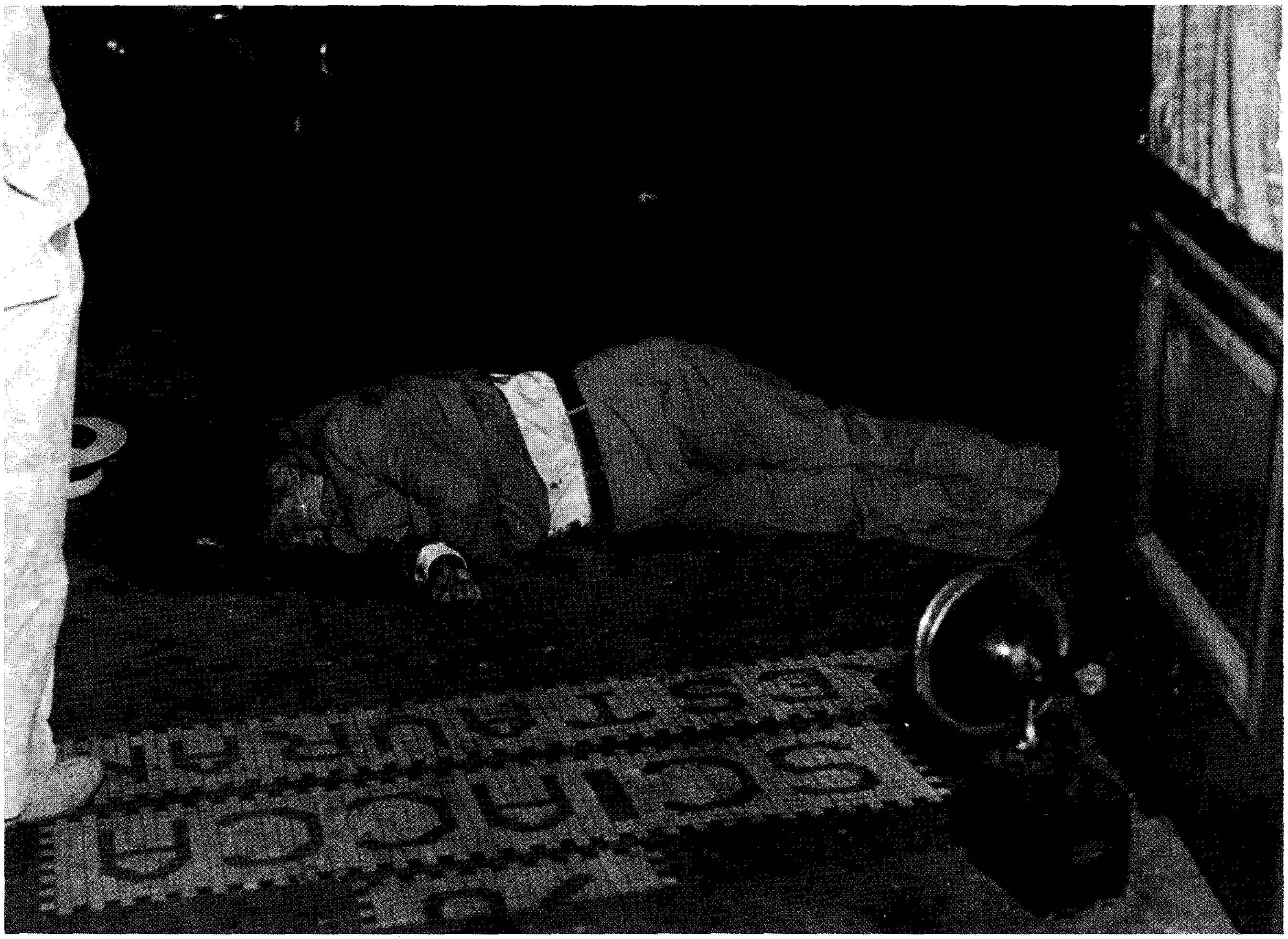


ALL PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY DAILY NEWS LP

special prosecutor in the Lindbergh-baby trial, in Flemington, New Jersey (February 12, 1935).

"Murder on the Wastelands": A prominent Brooklyn surgeon was found shot through the head and heart in the Flatlands (May 31, 1931).





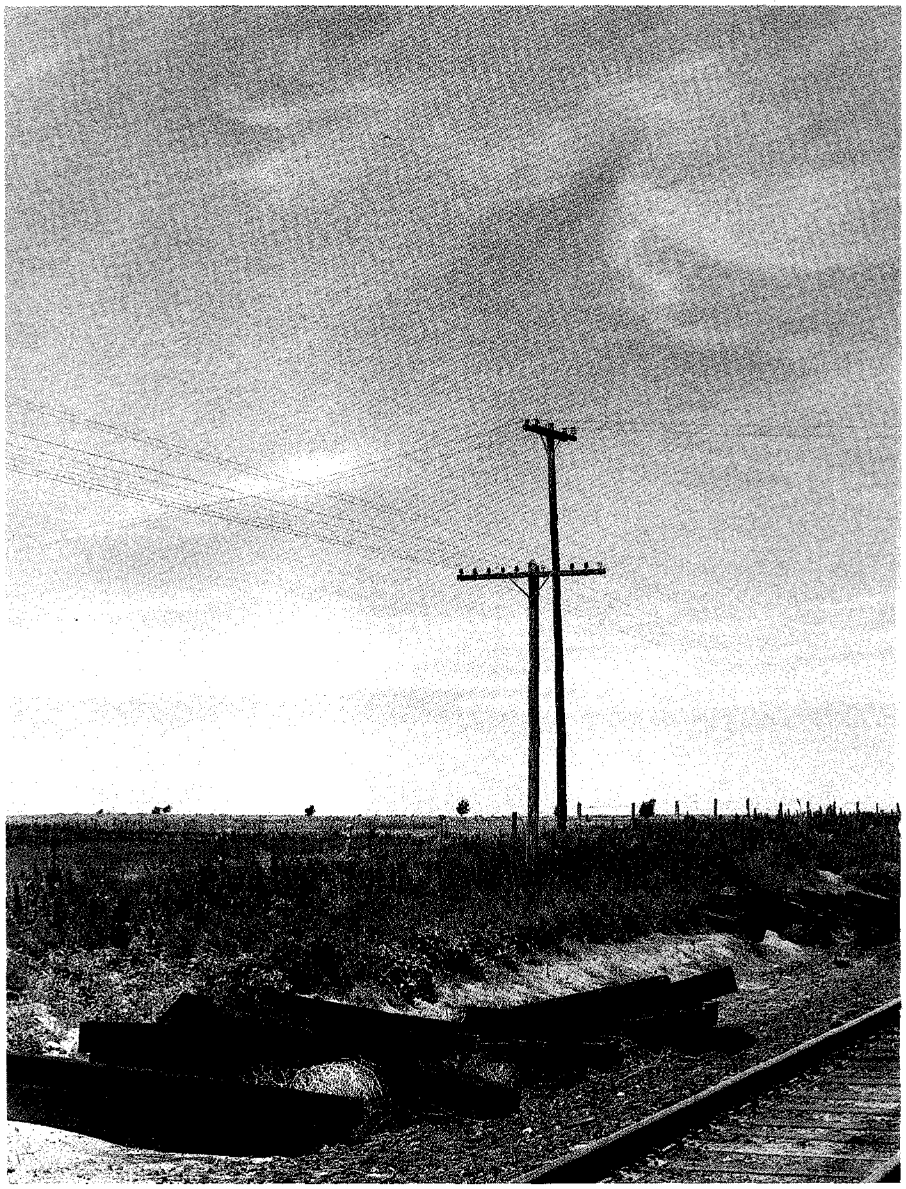
front pages in the hall leading to the city room of that newspaper. "New York Noir: Crime Photos from the Daily News Archive," compiled by William Hannigan (Rizzoli; $29.95), ranges across the decades when the *Daily News* proudly called itself "New York's Picture Newspaper" and had the best photo staff in town.

The photographs, and their subjects, are marvellous. In those days, gangsters knew how to dress. They all wear perfectly blocked hats, which sometimes cover their faces during perp walks. Trousers have razor-sharp creases. Every shoe has been brought to a high black sheen. The homicide cops wear belted coats and gray fedoras, and even at the most squalid crime scene their shoes, too, are immaculately shined. Those dazzling shoes encase huge loaflike feet, but even a flatfoot insisted on style.

"Mystery Blond in Murder" (at left): A former Miss New Jersey is taken in for questioning (February 11, 1952). "Spot Murder": Weegee's portrait of a slain bootlegger (August 7, 1936).

So did every moll. These glorious dames—tough, sleek, dangerous—stride on stiletto heels. They curl their lips in defiance. They weep beside fresh graves. In one image, we see Virginia Wright posing for a group photo in a police station with ten other members of a stickup gang. The men look defeated, but not this insolent young woman. Among the bent noses and agate eyes of her exhausted confederates, Miss Wright looks like the toughest person in the room. Today, such dark, unsettling photographs remind us of film-noir classics, from "Double Indemnity" (inspired by the Snyder case) to "Miller's Crossing." But there was a time when the movies reminded audiences of these remorseless urban photographs—that is, of life itself, with its ugly tough guys and tougher women, its corpses, its streets wet with rain.

In his archival researches, Hannigan discovered the original negative of Ruth Snyder's execution. Its banality is more chilling than the cropped print. In the original, while Snyder is jolted into eternity others stand casually about, and a gurney awaits the corpse. The moment is absolutely decisive, but it is something other than what we thought it was. More than seventy years later, that's news. —PETE HAMILL



PETER BROWN, "SOUTH CENTRAL OKLAHOMA," (1985)/STEPHEN COHEN GALLERY, LA

FICTION

CAPTURED BY THE INDIANS

When theory and reality meet.

BY T. CORAGHESSAN BOYLE

AT the lecture that night they had learned that human life was expendable. Melanie had sat there in shocked silence—the silence of guilt, mortification, and paranoia (what if someone should see her there in the crowd?)—while Dr. Toni Brinsley-Schneider, the Stanford bioethicist, informed them that humans, like pigs, chickens, and guppies, were replaceable. In the doctor's view, the infirm, the mentally impaired, criminals, premature infants, and the like were nonpersons, whose burden society could no longer be expected to support, especially in light of our breeding success.

"We're hardly an endangered species," she said with a grim laugh. "Did you know, all of you good and earnest people sitting here tonight, that we've just reached the population threshold of six billion?" She was cocked back from the lectern in a combative pose, her penurious little silver-rimmed reading glasses flinging fragments of light out into the audience. "Do any of you really want more condominiums, more shantytowns and favelas, more cars on the freeway, more group homes for the physically handicapped right around the corner from you? On your street? Next door?" She levelled her flashing gaze on them. "Well, do you?"

People shifted in their seats, a muted moist surge of sound that was like the timid lapping of waves on a distant shore. No one responded: this was a polite crowd, a liberal crowd dedicated to free expression, a university crowd, and, besides, the question had been posed for effect only. They'd have their chance to draw blood during the Q. & A.

Sean sat at attention beside Melanie, his face shining and smug. He was midway through the Ph.D. program in literary theory, and the theoreticians had hardened his heart: Dr. Brinsley-Schneider was merely confirming what he already knew. Melanie took his hand, but it wasn't a warm hand, a hand expressive of comfort and love—it was more like something dug frozen from the earth. She hadn't yet told him what she'd learned at two-thirty-three that afternoon, a secret as magical and expansive as a loaf of bread rising in a pan. Another sort of doctor had brought her the news, a doctor very different from the pinched and angry-looking middle-aged woman at the podium, a young dark-haired sylph of a woman, almost a girl, with a wide beatific face and congratulatory eyes, dressed all in white like a figure out of a dream.

THEY walked to the car in silence, the mist off the ocean redrawing the silhouettes of the trees, the street lights softly glowing. Sean wanted a burger—and maybe a beer—so they stopped off at a local bar-and-grill that the students hadn't discovered yet and she watched him eat and drink while the television over the bar replayed images of atrocities in the Balkans, the routine bombing of Iraq, and the itin-

erary of the railway killer. In between commercials for trucks that were apparently capable of scaling cliffs and fording rivers, they showed the killer's face, a mug shot of a slightly built Latino with an interrupted mustache and two dead eyes buried like artifacts in his head.

"You see that?" Sean said, nodding at the screen, the half-eaten burger clenched in one hand, the beer in the other. "That's what Brinsley-Schneider and these people are talking about. You think this guy worries much about the sanctity of human life?"

Can we afford compassion? Melanie could hear the lecturer's droning, thin voice in the back of her head, and she saw the dour, pale muffin of a face frozen in the spotlight when somebody in the back shouted "Nazi!" "I don't know why we have to go to these lectures anyway," she said. "Last year's series was so much more—do I want to say 'uplifting' here? Remember the woman who'd written that book about beekeeping? And the old professor—what was his name?—who talked about Yeats and Maud Gonne?"

"Stevenson Elliot Turner. He's emeritus in the English Department."

"Yeah," she said, "that's right, and why can't we have more of that sort of thing? Tonight—I don't know, she was so depressing. And so wrong."

"Are you kidding me? Turner's like the mummy's ghost—that talk was stupefying. He was probably giving the same lecture in English 101 thirty years ago. At least Brinsley-Schneider's controversial. At least she keeps you awake."

Melanie wasn't listening, and she didn't want to argue or debate or discuss. She wanted to tell Sean—who wasn't her husband, not yet, because they had to wait till he got his degree—that she was pregnant. But she couldn't. She already knew what he would say, and it was right on the same page with Dr. Toni Brinsley-Schneider.

She watched his eyes settle on the screen a moment, then drift down to the burger in his hand. He drew back his lips and took a bite, nostrils open wide, the iron muscles working in his jaw. "We live by the railroad tracks," Melanie said, by way of shifting the subject. "You think we have anything to worry about?"

"What do you mean?"

"The train killer."

Sean gave her a look. He was in his debating mode, his put-down mode, and she could see it in his eyes. "He doesn't kill trains, Mel," he said. "He kills people. And, yes, everybody has something to worry about, everybody on this planet. And if you were listening to half of what Brinsley-Schneider was saying tonight, I wouldn't be surprised if every third person out there on the street was a serial killer. There's too many of us, Mel, let's face it. You think things are going to get better? You think things are better now than when we were kids? When our parents were kids? It's over. Face it."

Something corny and ancient was on the jukebox—Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, somebody like that—because the place smacked of the kind of authenticity people were looking for, the kind of authenticity that cried out from the fallen arches, ravaged faces, and sclerotic livers of the regulars, to whom she and Sean, at twenty-nine and thirty, respectively, were as inauthentic as newborns.

At home, she changed into a cotton nightgown and got into bed with a book. She wasn't feeling anything, not elation or pain or disappointment, only the symptoms of a headache coming on. The book was something she'd discovered at a yard sale two days earlier—"Captured by the Indians: 15 Firsthand Accounts, 1750-1870"—and the minute she opened it she was swept up into a voyeuristic world of pain and savagery that trumped any horror she could conceive of. It wasn't a good thing to be captured by the Indians, as Sean had snidely observed on seeing her poised behind the cover the night before last, not good at all. There were no notions here of the politically correct, of revisionist history, or of the ethics of one people forcibly displacing another: no, it was the hot flash of murder and reprisal, the thump of the musket ball hitting home, the operation of knife and tomahawk on unresisting flesh. To die, to be murdered, to be robbed of your life and consciousness and being, that was the stuff of morbid fascination, and she couldn't get enough of it.

Sean was in his underwear, the briefs he preferred to boxers, the sort of thing she'd always associated with boys—little boys, children, that is—and as she watched him pad across the carpet on his way to the bathroom and his nightly ritual of cleansing, clipping, flossing, brushing, tweezing, and shaving it struck her that she'd never in her life been in an intimate situation with a man—or boy—in boxers. "The last they heard," Sean was saying, and he paused now to gaze at her over the mound of the bedspread and her tented knees, "he was in the Midwest someplace—after leaving Texas, I mean. That's a long ways from California, Mel, and, besides, his whole thing is so random—"

"He rides freight trains—or hops them, isn't that the terminology?" she said, peering over the cover of the book. "He hops freight trains, Sean, and that means he could be anywhere in twenty-four hours—or forty-eight. How long does it take to drive from Kansas to Isla Vista? Two days? Three?" She wanted to tell him about the doctor, and what the doctor had said, and what it was going to mean for them, but she didn't want to see the look on his face, didn't want to have to fight him, not now, not yet. He'd go pale and tug involuntarily at the grown-over hole in his left earlobe where a big gold hoop had resided before he got serious about his life, and then he'd tell her that she couldn't have her baby for the same reason that she couldn't have a dog or even a cat—at least until he'd done his dissertation, at least until then.

"I don't know, Mel," he said, and all the tiredness and resignation in the world crept into his voice, as if a simple discussion could martyr him. "What do you want me to say? He's coming through the window tonight? Of the two hundred and seventy million potential victims in the country, he's singled us out, zeroed right in on us like a homing pigeon?"

"Statistics," she said, and she was surprised at her own vehemence. "That's like saying you have about the same chance of getting attacked by a shark as you do of getting hit by lightning, and, yeah, sure, but anybody anywhere can get hit by lightning, and how many people live by the ocean, how many actually go in it, and of them how many are crazy enough—or foolhardy, that's the word I want here—how many are foolhardy enough to go out where the sharks are? Probably a hundred per cent of *them* get eaten, and we live right by the tracks, don't we?"

As if in answer, there was the sudden sharp blast of the northbound's whistle as it neared the intersection two blocks away, and then the building thunder of the train itself, the fierce clatter of the churning wheels and everything in the room trembling with the rush of it. Sean rolled his eyes and disappeared into the bathroom. When the thunder subsided and he could be heard again, he poked his head round the doorframe. "It's the Indians," he said.

"It has nothing to do with the Indians." She wouldn't give him this, though he was right, of course—or partially, anyway. "It's Brinsley-Schneider, who you seem to think is so great. Brinsley-Schneider and eugenics and euthanasia and all the rest of the deadly 'u's."

He was smiling the smile of the literary theorist in a room full of them, the smile that made him look like a toad with an oversized insect clamped in its jaws. "The deadly 'u's?" he repeated. And then, softening, he said, "All right, if it'll make you feel any better I'll check the doors and windows, O.K.?"

Her eyes were on the book. Way off in the night she could hear the dying rattle of the last car at the end of the train. Her life was changing, and why couldn't she feel good about it—why shouldn't she?

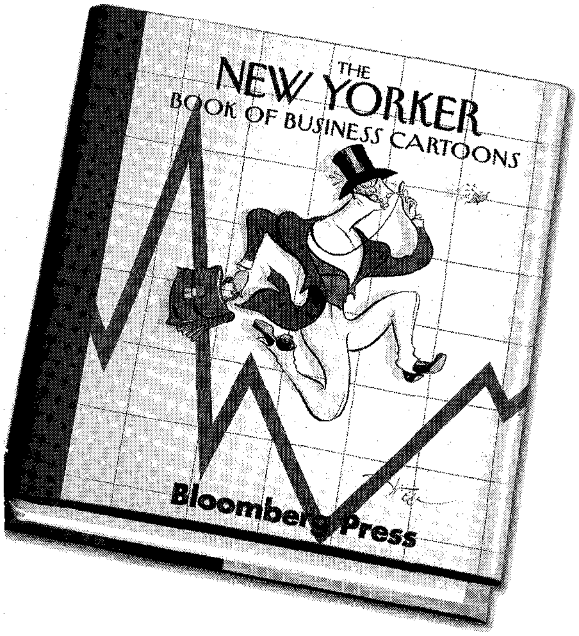
He was in the doorway still, his face settling into the lines and grooves he'd dug for it over the past two and a half years of high seriousness. He looked exactly like himself. "O.K.?" he said.

She didn't have to be at work until twelve the next day—she was an assistant to the reference librarian at the university library and her schedule was so flexible it was all but bent over double—and after Sean left for class she sat in front of the TV with the sound off and read the account of Lavina Eastlick, who was twenty-nine and the mother of five when the Sioux went on a rampage near Acton, Minnesota, in the long-forgotten year of 1862. There was a moment's warning, no more than that. A frightened neighbor shouting in the yard, first light, and suddenly Lavina Eastlick—a housewife, a hopeful young woman Melanie's age rudely jolted from sleep—was running barefoot through the wet grass, in her nightgown, a rifle clutched in her hand. The Indians soon overtook her and cut down her husband, her children, her neighbors, and her neighbors' children, taking the women captive. She'd been shot twice, and could barely stand, let alone walk. When she stumbled and fell, a Sioux brave beat her about the head and shoulders with the stock of his rifle and left her for dead. Later, when they'd gone, she was able to crawl off and hide in the brush through the long afternoon and interminable night that followed. The wounded children—hers and her neighbors'—lay sprawled in the grass behind her, crying out for water, but she couldn't move to help them. On the second afternoon, the Indians returned to dig at the children's wounds with sharpened sticks until the terrible gargling cries choked off and the locusts in the trees filled the void with their mindless chant.

And what would Dr. Toni Brinsley-Schneider have thought of that? She'd probably applaud the Indians for eliminating the useless and weak, who would only have grown up crippled around their shattered limbs in any case. That was what Melanie was thinking as she closed the book and glanced up at the casual violence scrolling across the TV screen, but once she was on her feet she realized she was hungry and headed off in the direction of the kitchen, thinking tuna fish on rye with roasted sunflower seeds and red bell pepper. She supposed she'd be putting on weight now, eating for two, and wouldn't that be the way to announce the baby to Sean six months down the

"I sense a lot more going on with you than 'house-husband.'"

Very funny business, indeed!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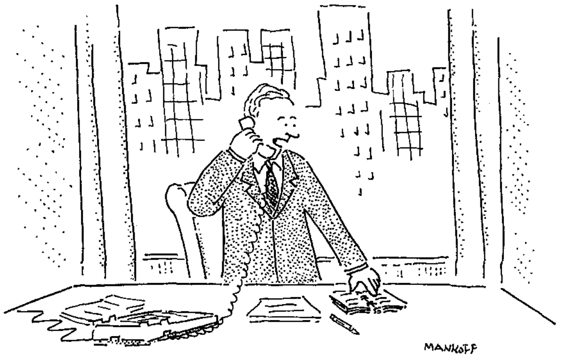
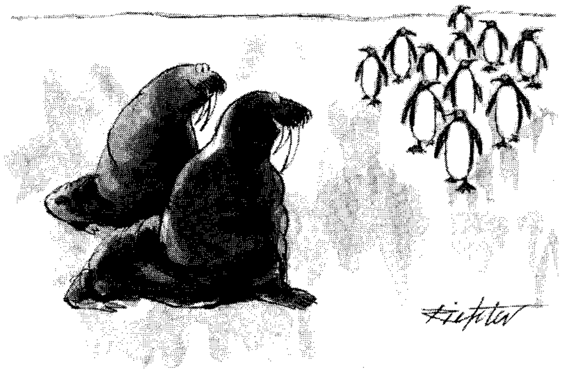
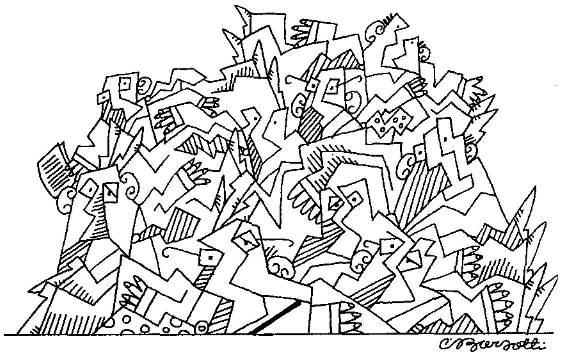


"No, Thursday's out. How about never—is never good for yo



"Here come the suits!"



"Wentworth, could I take another look at that reorganization plan?"

BLOOMBERG PRESS

road, like the prom mom who hid it till the last fatal minute. *And you thought I was just going to fat, didn't you, honey?*

Outside, beyond the windows, the sun washed over the flowers in the garden, all trace of the night's mist burned off. There were juncos and finches at the feeder she shared with the upstairs neighbor, a dog asleep at the curb across the street, pure white fortresses of cloud building over the mountains. It was still, peaceful, an ordinary day, no Indians in sight, no bioethicists, no railway killers hopping off freight trains and selecting victims at random, and she chopped onions and diced celery with a steady hand while something inexpressibly sad came over the radio, a cello playing in a minor key, all alone, until it was joined by a single violin that sounded as if a dead man were playing it, playing his own dirge—and maybe he was dead, maybe the recording was fifty years old, she was thinking, and she had a sudden image of a man with a long nose and a Gypsy face, serenading the prisoners at Auschwitz.

Stop it, she told herself, *just stop it.* She should be filled with light, shouldn't she? She should be knitting, baking, watching the children at the playground with the greedy intensity of a connoisseur.

The sunflower seeds were in the pan, the one with the loose handle and the black nonstick surface, the heat turned up high, when the doorbell rang. The violin died at that moment—literally—and the unctuous, breathless voice of the announcer she hated (the one who always sounded as if he were straining over a bowel movement) filled the apartment as she crossed the front room and stepped into the hall. She was about to pull open the door—it would be the mailman at this hour, offering up a clutch of bills and junk mail and one of Sean's articles on literary theory (or Theory, as he called it, "Just Theory, with a capital 'T,' like Philosophy or Physics"), returned from an obscure journal with postage due—but something stopped her.

"Who is it?" she called from behind the door, and she could smell the sunflower seeds roasting in the pan.

There was no answer, so she moved to the window beside the door and parted the curtains. A man stood on the concrete doorstep, staring at the flat plane of the door as if he could see through it. He was small and thin, no more than five-five or six, tanned to the color of the copper teakettle on the stove and dressed in the oily jeans and all-purpose long-sleeved shirt of the bums who lined Cabrillo Boulevard with their Styrofoam cups and pint bottles—or should she call them "panhandlers" or "the homeless" or "the apartmentally challenged"? Sean called them bums, and she guessed she'd fallen into the habit herself. They said crude things to you when you walked down the street, gesturing with fingers that were as black as the stubs of cigars. They were bums, that was all, and who needed them?

But then the man saw her there at the window and turned to her, and she had a shock: he was Hispanic, a Latino just like the man on TV, the killer, with the same dead cinders for eyes. He put three fingers together and pushed them at his open mouth, and she saw then that he had no mustache—no, no mustache, but what did that mean? Anybody could shave, even a bum.

"What do you want?" she called, feeling trapped in her own apartment, caught behind the wall of glass like a fish in an aquarium.

He looked surprised by the question. What did he want? He wanted food, money, sex, booze, drugs, her car, her baby, her life, her apartment. "Hungry," he said. And then, when she didn't respond, "You got work?"

She just shook her head—no, she didn't have any work, and all the time that she had to give to this man, this stranger, this bum, had already been used up, because there was smoke in the kitchen and the seeds were burning in the pan.

IT was past eight when she drove home from work, feeling exhausted, as if she were in her eighth month instead of the second. The day was softening into night, birds dive-bombing the palms along the boulevard, joggers and in-line skaters reduced to shadows on the periphery of her vision. All through the afternoon the mist had been rolled up like a carpet on the horizon, but it was moving closer now and she could smell it on the air—it was going to be another dense, compacted night. She parked and came up the walk and saw that the upstairs neighbor—Jessica, Jessica Something, who'd been there only a month and was so pathologically shy she cupped both hands to her face when she talked to you as if a real live moving mouth were somehow offensive—had been doing something in the flower

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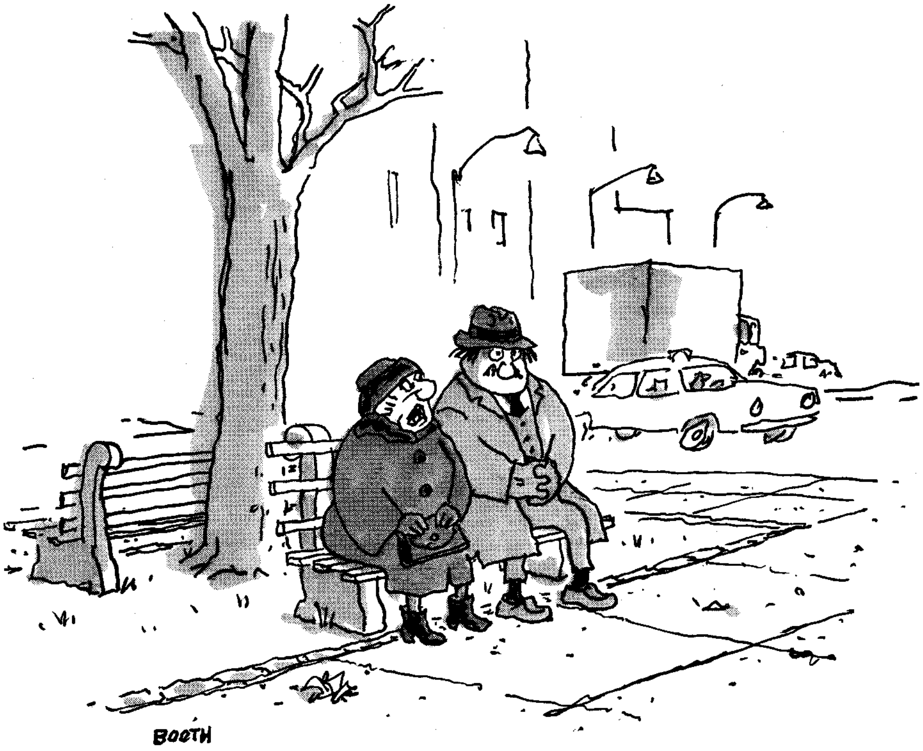

"Willard! About your mother's biscuits and coleslaw! Shut up about your mother's biscuits! And shut up about your mother's coleslaw!"

• •

garden. The earth was raw in several spots, as if it had been turned over, and there was a spade leaning against the side of the house. Not that it mattered to Melanie—she'd never had a green thumb and plants were just plants to her. If Jessica wanted to plant flowers, that was fine; if she wanted to dig them up, that was fine, too.

Sean was in the kitchen, banging things around and singing—bellowing—along with one of Wagner's operas, the only music he ever listened to. Which one was it? She'd heard them all a thousand times. There it was, yes, Siegfried going down for the count: "Götterdämmerung." Sean was making his famous shrimp-and-avocado salad and he was in the throes of something—Wagner, Theory, some sort of testosterone rush—and he barely glanced up at her as she trudged into the bedroom. Her mistake was in taking off her shoes—the flats she wore for the sake of her feet while propping up an automatic smile behind the reference desk—because once her shoes were off she felt out of balance and had to rest her head on the pillow, just for a minute.

The gods of Valhalla had been laid to rest and the house was silent when she awoke to the soft click of the bedroom door. Sean was standing there framed in the doorway, the tacky yellow globe of the hallway light hanging over his shoulder like a captive moon. It was dark beyond the windows. "What?" he said. "Are you sick or something?"

Was she? Now was her chance, now was the time to tell him, to share the news, the joyous news, pop the cork on the bottle of champagne and let's go out to a nice place, a really nice place, and save the famous shrimp-and-avocado salad for tomorrow. "No," she said. "No. Just tired, that's all."

At dinner—Sean and Lacan and a scatter of papers, the salad, lemonade from the can, and an incongruous side dish of ranch-style barbecue beans, also from the can—she did tell him about the man at the door that morning. "He said he wanted work," she said, waving a forkful of shrimp and beans in an attempt to delineate the scene for the third time, "and I told him I didn't have any work for him. That was it. The whole thing."

SEAN had begun to develop a groove just over the bridge of his nose, a V-shaped gouge that might have been a scar or the mark of a hot branding iron. It vanished when he was asleep or sunk into the couch with a beer and the *Times*, but it was there now, deeper than ever. "You mean he was Mexican?"

"I don't know," she said. "He was a Latino. I was scared. He really scared me."

There was a long silence. The clock her mother had given her ticking dramatically from atop the brick-and-board bookcase in the hall, someone's sprinklers going on outside, the muted rumble of Jessica Something's TV seeping down through the ceiling—Melanie half expected to hear the blast of the train's whistle, but it was too early yet. "It could be," Sean said finally. "I mean, why not? You're right. The guy takes a train, he could be anywhere. And then there's the aleatory factor."

She just stared at him.

"Chance. Luck. Fate. You can't buck fate." And then a look came over his face, two parts high seriousness, one part vigilante. "But you can be ready for it when it comes—you can be prepared." Suddenly he was on his feet. "You just wait here, just sit tight," and his voice had an edge to it, as if she'd been arguing with him, as if she had to be restrained from running off into the night like one of the screaming teen-agers in a cheap horror film. "I'll be right back."

She wanted a glass of wine, but she knew that she couldn't drink anymore, not if she was going to keep the baby—and if she hadn't known, the doctor had taken her down a smiling anfractuous road full of caveats and prohibitions, the sort of thing she, the doctor, must go through ten times a day, albeit tailoring her tone to the educational level of the patient. Outside, the sprinklers switched off with an expiring wheeze. She could hear Sean in the bedroom, rummaging around for something. Tonight—she would tell him tonight.

Because the knowledge was too big for her to contain, and she wanted to call her mother and have a long confidential chat, and call her sisters, too—but before that, before there could be any possibility of that, she had to tell Sean, and Sean had to say the things she needed to hear. During her five-o'clock break, she'd confided in one of the girls she worked with, Gretchen Mohr, but it did nothing to reassure her. Gretchen was only twenty-three, in no way serious about the guy she was dating, and Melanie could tell from the way she squeezed her eyes shut over the news that the idea of a baby was about as welcome to her as paraplegia or epilepsy. Oh, she tried to cover herself with a flurry of congratulations and a non-stop barrage of platitudes and one-liners, but the final thing she said, her last and deepest thought, gave her away: "I don't know," she sighed, staring down into the keyhole of her Diet Coke can as if she were reading tea leaves. "I just don't think I'd be comfortable bringing a baby into a world like this."

When Melanie looked up, Sean was standing over her. He was wearing a T-shirt with a picture of Freud on it, over a legend that read "Dr. Who?" His hair was slicked down and the left side of his face, up to and encircling the ear, was inflamed with the skin condition he was forever fighting. But that was ordinary, that was the way he always looked. What was different was his eyes—proud, incandescent, lit up like fireworks—and his hands, or what was in his hands. Swaddled in coarse white cloth that was stained with what might have been olive oil lay an object she recognized from the movies, from TV, and from pawnshop display cases: a gun.

"What is that?" she said, edging away from him. "What are you showing me?"

"Come on, Mel, give me a break."

"It's a gun, isn't it?"

"We're on the ground floor here, and we're going to lock the windows tonight, even if it's hot, which I doubt because the fog's already coming in, and we're going to keep this by the bed, on the night table, that's all."

She'd drawn up her legs and hugged them to her, as far away from him on the couch as she could manage to be. "I don't *believe* you," she said, and she could hear the thin whine of complaint in her own voice. "You know what my father would say if he saw you now? Where did you get it? Why didn't you tell me?" she demanded, and she couldn't help herself—her voice broke on the final syllable.

He drew the thing back, took it from ts cradle and raised it up in one hand until it grazed the ceiling. The muscles of his forearm flexed, the soiled rag dropped to the carpet. "Son of a bitch," he said. "Son of a fucking bitch. Tell me his," he said. "Would you rather be the killer or the killee?"

SHE was asleep and dreaming the image of a baby floating in amniotic fluid, the cord attached, eyes shut ight—a big baby, an enormous glowng baby floating free like the interstellar embryo of "2001"—when a sudden sharp explosion jolted her awake. It took her a moment, heart pounding, breath coming quick, to understand what it was—it was a scream, a woman's scream, improvised and fierce. The room was dark. Sean was asleep beside her. The scream—a single rising note trailing off into what might have been a sob or a gasp—seemed to have come from above, where Jessica Something lived alone with her potted plants and two bloated, pampered, push-faced cats that were never allowed out of the apartment for fear of the world and its multiple dangers. Melanie sat up and caught her breath.

Nothing. The alarm clock on the night table flashed 1:59 and then 2:00.

Earlier, after a dessert of tapioca pudding with mandarin-orange slices fresh from the can, she and Sean had watched a costume drama on the public station that gave her a new appreciation for the term mediocre (mediocre, as she observed to Sean, didn't come easy—you had to work at it), and then she'd slipped into bed with her book while the station went into pledge-break mode and Sean sat there paralyzed on the couch. She hadn't read two paragraphs before he tiptoed into the room, naked and in full amatory display. She left the light on, the better to admire him, but the book dropped to the floor, and then it didn't matter. She felt new, re-created. His body was so familiar, but everything was different now. She'd never been so aroused, rising up again and again to hold him deep inside her in the place where the baby was. Afterward, immediately afterward, almost as if he'd been drugged, he fell asleep with his head on her breast, and it was left to her to reach up awkwardly and kill the lamp. They hadn't discussed a thing.

But now—now there was chaos, and it erupted all at once. There was a thump overhead, the caustic burn of a man's voice, and then another scream, and another, and Melanie was out of bed, the walls pale and vague, the dark shadow that was Sean lurching up mechanically, and "What?" he was saying. "What is it?"

Footsteps on the stairs. More screams. Melanie flicked on the light and there was Sean, dressed only in his briefs, the long muscles of his legs, all that skin, and the gun in his hand, the pistol, the nasty gleaming black little thing he'd bought at

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a gun show six months ago and never bothered to tell her about. "Sean," she said. "Sean, don't!" But he was already out the door, racing down the hall in the sick yellow wash of the overhead light, already at the front door, the screams from above rising, rising. She was in her nightgown, barefoot, but she had no thought for anything but to get out that door and put an end to whatever this was.

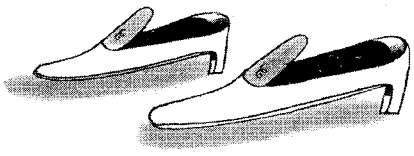
There was a street light out front but the fog had cupped a hand over it and blotted the light from the windows and the stairway, too. Melanie shot a glance up the stairs to where Jessica stood, bracing herself against the railing, in nothing but panties and a brassiere torn off one shoulder, and then she saw the glint of Sean's back across the lawn, where the cars threw up a bank of shadow against the curb. He was shouting something—ragged, angry syllables that would have made no sense to anyone, not even a Theorist—and she saw then that there was somebody else there with him, a dark shifting figure rallying round a shuffle of feet on the pavement. She was closer now, running, Sean's feet glowing in the night, the long white stalks of his legs and expanse of his back—he seemed to be wrestling with a shadow, but, no, it was an animate thing, a man, a dark little man in bum's clothes with a shovel clenched in both hands and Sean fighting him for it. Where was the gun? There was no gun. Both of Sean's hands were on the shovel and both of the little man's, and now Jessica was screaming again. "The gun," Sean said. "In the grass. Get the gun."

In that moment, the little man managed to wrench the shovel free, and in the next—it happened so quickly that she wasn't sure she actually saw it—he caught Sean under the chin with the haft, and then the blade, and Sean was on the ground. She never hesitated. Before the man could bring the blade down—and that was what he meant to do, no mistake about it, his arms already raised high for a savage stabbing thrust—she took hold of the haft with all the strength in her and pulled it tight to her chest.

She could smell him. She could feel him. He hung on, the little man, the bum, the one who'd been on the doorstep that afternoon with his reeking breath and greasy clothes, and then he jerked so violently at the shovel that she almost pitched headlong into him, into the spill of his flesh and the dankness of the grass. But she didn't. She jerked back, and Jessica screamed, and Sean, reeling like a drunk, began to pick himself up off the lawn, and for the instant before the man let go of the shovel and flung himself into the shadows across the street, she was staring him full in the face—yes, but she wasn't seeing the man on the TV or the man on the porch or any one of the army of bums lined up along the street in their all-purpose shirts and sweat-stained caps, she was seeing Dr. Toni Brinsley-Schneider, Dr. Brinsley-Schneider the bioethicist, just her.

THERE were two policemen. From where she was sitting at the end of the couch, Melanie could see their cruiser reined in at the curb, the interior a black pit, the slowly revolving light on top chopping up the night over and over again. They were built like runners or squash players, both of them—crisp, efficient men in their thirties, who looked away from her bare legs and feet and into her eyes. "So you heard screams, and this was about what time?"

They'd already taken Jessica Something's statement—Jessica Fortgang, she had a name now: *Ms.* Fortgang, as the policemen referred to her—and Sean, hunched in the armchair with an angry red welt under his chin, had given his version of events, too. The man in the night, the bum, the one who'd been the cause of all this, had escaped, at least for the time being, and they were denied the satisfaction of seeing him handcuffed in the back of the cruiser, bowed and contrite. Sean had been in a state when the police arrived, clenching his jaws as if he were biting down hard on something, gesturing with a closed fist and wide sweeps of his arm. "The railway killer, it was him, the railway killer," he kept repeating, until the policeman with the mustache, the taller one, told him that the railway killer had turned himself in at the Mexican border some fifteen hours earlier. "That was the Texas border," he added, and then his partner, in a flat, professional voice, said that they were treating this as an assault, in any case, possibly an attempted rape. "Your neighbor, Ms. Fortgang? She apparently hired this individual to do some yard work this afternoon, and then invited him in for iced tea and a sandwich when he was done. Then he comes back at night—and this is a cultural thing, you understand, a woman looks at one of these guys twice and he expects a whole lot more. He's a transient, that's all, nobody from around here. But we'll get him."

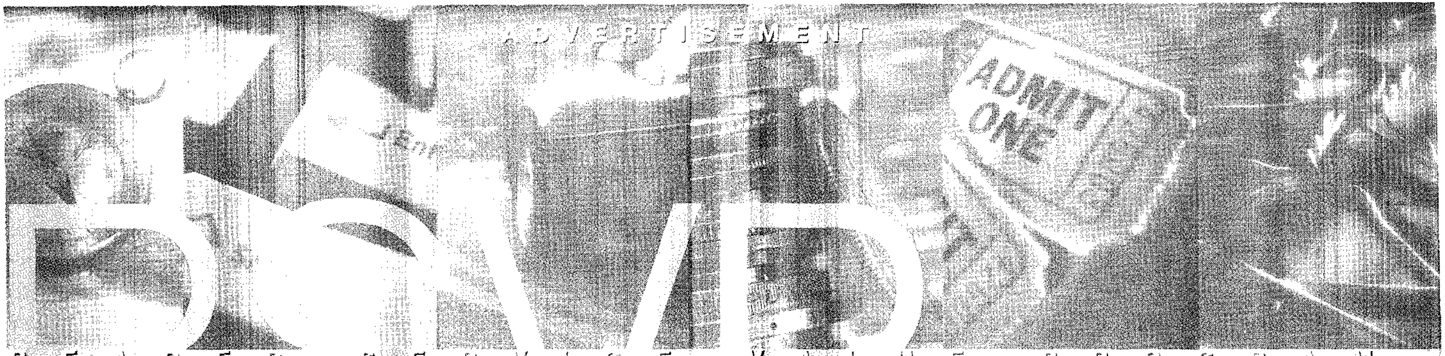


Melanie answered their questions patiently, though her heart was still jumping in her chest and she kept glancing at Sean, as if for guidance. But Sean was sullen, distant, withdrawn into some corner of himself—the gun was an embarrassment, the man had knocked him down, he'd been involved in an ordinary altercation with an ordinary bum, and the railway killer had already given himself up. She saw the lines in his face, saw the way his lower lip pushed his chin down into the soft flesh beneath it. Theory couldn't help here. Theory deconstructs. Theory has no purpose, no point, no overview or consolation—it was a kind of intellectual masturbation. If she hadn't known it before, she knew it now.

The police thanked them, tried on the briefest of smiles, and then Sean showed them to the door, and Melanie got up from the couch with the vague idea of making herself a cup of herbal tea to help her unwind. Just as the door closed, she called out Sean's name, and she almost said it, almost said, "Sean, there's something I've been wanting to tell you." But there was no use in that now.

Sean turned away from the door, his shoulders slumped, the corners of his mouth drawn down. After the skirmish on the lawn, he'd shrugged into a pair of jeans and the first shirt he could find—a Hawaiian print, festive with palm fronds and miniature pineapples—and she saw that he'd misbuttoned it. He looked hopeless. He looked lost in his own living room.

She held that picture of him, and then she was thinking, unaccountably, of a captive of the Sioux, a young woman taken from her husband to be bride to a chief, the business settled in the smoke and confusion of a desperate fight, her daughter crying out over the cacophony of shouts and curses and the rolling thunder of a hundred rifles firing at once. Months later, fleeing with her captors after a loss in battle, she watched a brave from another party come up to them on his pony, in full regalia, trailing the shawl she'd knitted for her daughter and a tiny shrunken scalp with the hair—the blond shining hair—still attached. ◆



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THE CRITICS

BOOKS

YEATS IN LOVE

The poet in search of his muses.

BY EDNA O'BRIEN

WHEN poets fall in love, the conflagration is almost certain to be committed to paper. However, it is the sensibility and torment of the poet which charge the words, and the love object becomes a figment of that heightened imagination. From Baudelaire's "Sabatier Cycle" we know, for instance, that the poet harbored feelings of hatred and revenge for his "Angel of gaiety." Ted Hughes's "Lovesong" contends that lovers inevitably devour one another. Among the galaxy of doomed Russian poets of the nineteen-twenties, Alexander Blok, in "Parting," describes love as "the gamut of the spirit's luxuries"; Marina Tsvetayeva, throwing down the gantlet, reminds her paramour, in "Poem of the End," that love is "a flower flooded with blood"—not a snatched hour, the way ladies and gentlemen play at it. And the cruelly neglected Hungarian Miklós Radnotí writes, in "Hesitating Ode," of seeing his absent lover's hand on the pillow like "a birch branch going to sleep."

But in the case of W. B. Yeats, who wrote some of the century's most exquisite, anguished, and reverberatory love poetry, we know the love object by name:

> Maud Gonne at Howth station waiting
>   a train,
> Pallas Athena in that straight back and
>   arrogant head . . .

They met on January 30, 1889, in his father's shabby house in Bedford Park, London. Yeats was a tentative, dreaming Lancelot, aged twenty-three, and Maud, a few months younger, was so versed in the ways of the world that, to the astonishment of Yeats's sister Lolly, she kept the hansom cab waiting outside. She had come from fashionable Belgravia. For Yeats, who was ever alert to signs and portents, it was a definitive day and one on which, as he put it in his memoirs, "the troubling of my life began."

The daughter of an English Army officer, Maud had thrown herself into the nationalist cause of the starving and beleaguered Irish peasants. She had come to the Yeats household on a revolutionary quest, carrying a letter of introduction from an old Fenian, John O'Leary, whom Yeats greatly admired. Her photograph graced a wall in the dingy club rooms of the Irish National League, in Dublin, and even George Bernard Shaw, who was not given to hyperbole, said that she was "outrageously beautiful." Yeats's sisters, Lolly and Lily, looked on in amazement at this apparition who, to their dismay, wore slippers instead of proper shoes. His silent, aggrieved mother was not there to witness the arrival of the woman who would supplant her in Yeats's unending quest for the unattainable and iconic. His father, John, chided the vivacious visitor for her repudiation of the British Crown.

So Yeats—"starved for the bosom of his faery bride"—got more than any poet could have expected on that wintry morning. He got a visionary beauty, one who believed in clairvoyance, though not as strenuously as he did; and he got a combative spirit whose secretive comings and goings would drive him to such a dementia that any amorous cry of bird or beast came to gall him. In short, drive him to poetry: "But even at the starting post, all sleek and new, I saw the wildness in her."

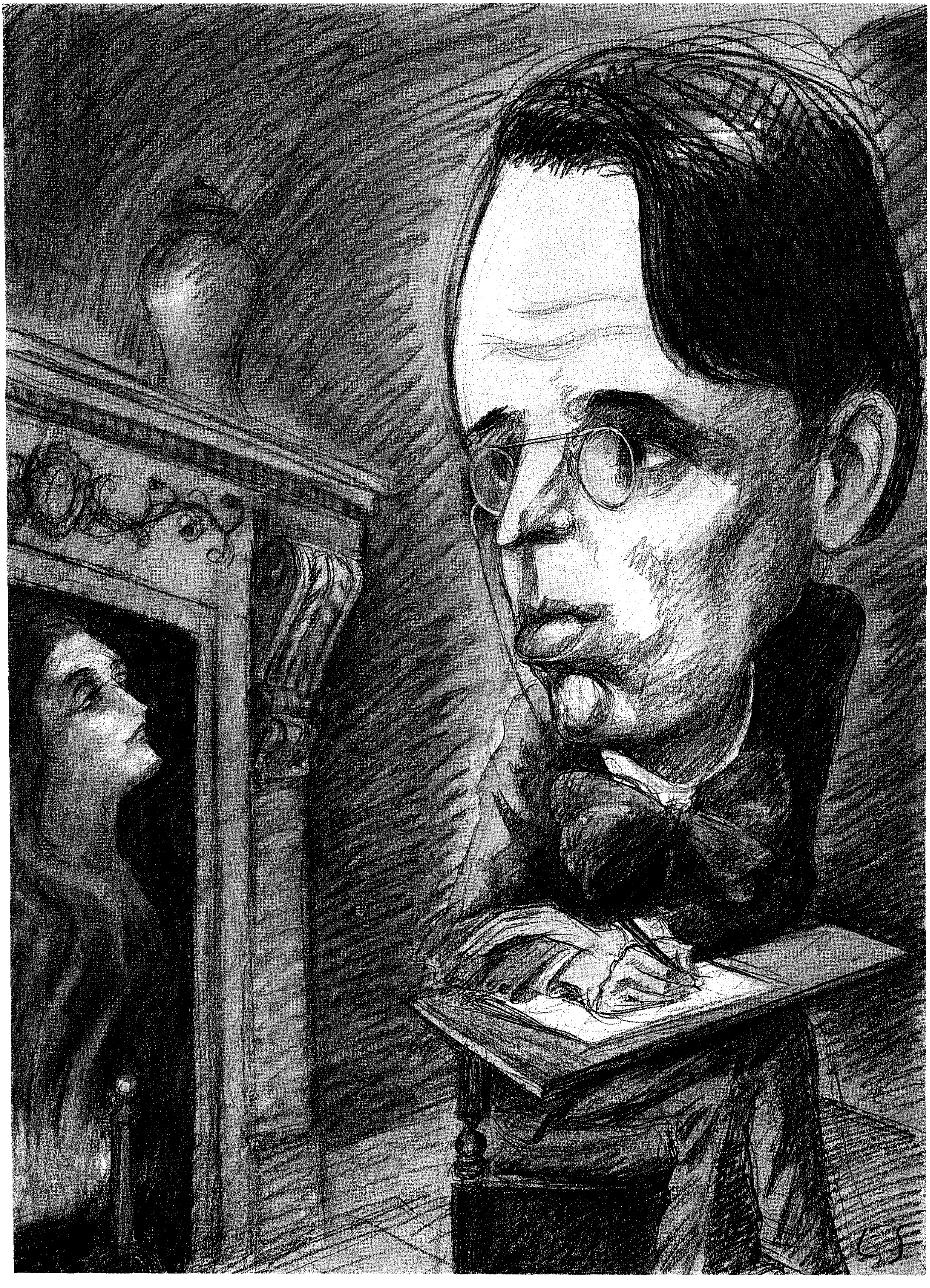
Yeats was both helpless and, no doubt, unwilling to protect himself against a woman who was the embodiment of Greek and Arthurian goddesses and the personification of Cathleen ni Houlihan, the hallowed heroine of ancient Ireland. He would write a play for Maud of that name—one in which young men wished to follow in the steps of the "yellow-haired Donoughs," martyrs willing to lay down their lives for the ghost woman and the country. She was enlisting him to be the voice of Ireland, something he had secretly resolved to himself, believing that "there is no fine literature without nationality" and feeling toward Sligo, his mother's birthplace, that the "sea cliffs gave tongue to his poetry."

That same night, visiting Maud in her rooms, he saw her pass before the window in white and rearrange a spray of apple blossoms, and the two images woman and blossom, meshed. Twelve years and many disappointments later he wrote:

> Blossom pale, she pulled down the pale
>   blossom
> At the moth hour and hid it in her bosom

IT is a captivating story and one that—with variation—has been told many times. Brenda Maddox knows it well but in her new biography, "Yeats' Ghosts: The Secret Life of W. B. Yeats (HarperCollins; $32), she has decided—as she did in her biography of Nor Joyce—to take up the cudgel for th wife. "Yeats's Ghosts" is a far riche more engrossing, and more rewardin work than the earlier one, because ther is more to trawl. Nora Joyce seldom pu pen to paper and, in many ways, ha the inscrutability of a bush woman. Relying chiefly on the prose works, Yeats "Autobiographies," his "Memoirs," edite

A new biography makes the point that women were the triggers for Yeats's mysterious and unflagging creative powers.



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by Denis Donoghue, his "Collected Letters," "The Gonne-Yeats Letters," edited by Anna MacBride White and A. Norman Jeffares, and the flummoxing "Vision Papers," the rudiments of which stemmed from the automatic writing provided by Yeats's wife, Georgie, Maddox weaves a racy story filled with humor and perspicacity.

Yeats, at fifty-two, felt an astrological imperative to be wed by October, 1917. Bertha Georgie Hyde-Lees, a twenty-five-year-old English girl, "strikingly beautiful in a barbaric way," was plucked at short notice. However, Georgie's mother, Nelly Tucker, had qualms, thinking of Yeats as a bachelor "with a talent for love-making" and a man who had broken his heart over the incendiary Maud Gonne. Little did she know that his heart had undergone a recent and more humiliating battering.

For thirty years, Yeats had sustained hopes of marrying Maud, deeming her his "most secret and inviolate rose" and blind to the fact that she was carrying a child soon after she met him—the child of her French lover, Lucien Millevoye. It was Millevoye who had taught her revolutionary politics, had christened her Ireland's Joan of Arc, and, as she conceded, was the only man "who could take the chill out of her blood in bed." Toward Yeats, the eroticism was reserved for words—as, for instance, during a heady spell in 1898, when she reported dreams in which they were saturated by each other's love and embarked upon their "spiritual marriage." Like all craven lovers, Yeats believed that the power of his love and the incantation of his poetry would win her. Yet each time he proposed marriage he was refused. Reeling from the rejections, he wrote in the poem "In the Seven Woods" of the "unavailing outcries and the old bitterness that empty the heart." He saw the brutal consequence of feeding the heart on fantasy when she married an Irish soldier, Major John MacBride, in 1903, and felt it "as a blast of lightning." Some three years later, Maud left MacBride on the grounds of "cruelty, infidelity and drunkenness." Inevitably, she turned to Yeats for comfort. Their spiritual marriage descended from the astral, and they managed to spend a night together in Paris—a communion that cannot have reached vertiginous heights or depths, since it was not repeated. He had had for a lover Olivia Shakespear, a young woman, unhappily married, who had introduced him to "the passionate kiss" and its sequel, but, sensing Maud's spectral presence, she had eventually gone "weeping away." After the debacle with Maud in Paris, he wrote in his journal, "My desires must go elsewhere if I am to escape their poisons." The escape was with a part-time actress and physiotherapist, Mabel Dickinson, who, before long, shocked him by announcing that she was pregnant. The spirit world was consulted, deception was intimated, and, after a bitter row in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Mabe was sent packing.

Maddox has taken a close and sympathetic look at these liaisons and concluded that Yeats's mother, for whom his writing "was an attempt to explain himself," was the progenitor of all his words and all his wooing. Maud, by persistently refusing him, came closes to the reincarnating of that distan and frigid presence. However, in 1917 Yeats, seeing the gray in her hair, fel for the enchantments of her twenty-two-year-old daughter, Iseult, an impetuous girl who had some of he mother's incandescent beauty withou the politics. He spent a summer wit mother and daughter in Maud's hous in Normandy, in the company of a parrot, a monkey, two guinea pigs, tw rabbits, two dogs, and thirty-three singing, free-flying canaries. Yeats determined that he should marry Iseult. Sh liked him, walked with him on the seashore, was flattered by his attention demurred, then said no; but, like he mother, she wished for Yeats to be pa of her life. An inharmonious trio se sail for England, with Yeats heading fo Sussex and a recalcitrant Mrs. Tucke to ask for Georgie's hand.

GEORGIE had known Yeats for year had attended séances with him and had been sponsored by him into th Hermetic Order of the Golden Daw a secret society of mystics devoted t the rituals of magic. Moreover, she ha heard her own secret voices telling h that they might marry. Soon she we to London to arrange for the public tion of the marriage banns, delighted that their hermetic friendship had ripened into love. For Yeats, there followed an unsettling interim of agitation, dither, and nightmares. He feared that the malice of Neptune was at work, and he believed that he should call off the engagement. He went to his longtime friend and collaborator Lady Gregory, at Coole House, to think things over, and, because he was still besotted with Iseult, his letters to Georgie are not reveries to her beauty. He merely pictured his future bride in their marital abode, sitting by the fire or dealing with household matters; as an afterthought, he added the hope that "her strong bones would kindle his desire."

When Georgie stepped out of the Harrow Road Register Office, on October 21, 1917, and embarked on her honeymoon with the somewhat tetchy poet, Iseult and Maud were present in all but the flesh—"a sweetheart from another life floats there," as he would write three years later, in "An Image from a Past Life." Maddox describes the honeymoon brilliantly: the hotel bedroom in Sussex (probably freezing), a storm outside, trees creaking, Yeats restive, a letter from Iseult that unhinged the young bride, and the shadow of Maud Gonne—"the hovering thing." Call it cunning, call it the unconscious, call it the intervention of Aphrodite, what emerged has the thrall of great fiction. In an instant, Georgie Yeats metamorphosed from Jane Eyre into the dauntless Rosalind of "As You Like It." Appealing to an army of spirits, she sat at a table, took up a pencil, and began compulsively to write opaque, automatic messages from spirit masters. The words skittered off the page and were a summons to her refractory bridegroom. They were, he believed, "a font of symbols for his poetry." They were a font of symbols for other things, too. The "controls," as the spirits were referred to, assured Yeats that "the bird" (Iseult) was all right, but that a master by the name of Thomas felt concern for a young wife in need of attention and sex. Soon, "the gyres and cubes and midnight things" that featured on the page, along with winged horses, were an expression of Georgie's body. A few days later, with the predictability of the weatherman, Yeats was able to assure Lady Gregory of his happiness—that Saturn had melted into Venus. In time, Georgie became pregnant, enabling him to no longer lament that he had only a book, a poem, to prove his blood to his forebears. Their daughter, Anne, was born in February, 1919, and their son, Michael, in August, 1921. Yeats renovated a tower near Gort, in County Galway, which he dedicated to Georgie. They moved between Galway and Dublin;

"And just what was that little window you clicked off when I came in?"

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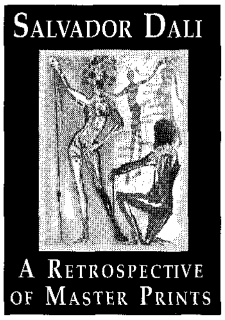

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BRIEFLY NOTED

COLLECTORS, by Paul Griner (Random House; $19.95). As a child, Jean Duprez collected scars while playing dangerous games with her cousin Claudia; as an adult and a sharp-witted ad executive, she collects fountain pens. But when Steven Cain, a cold, eccentric collector, befriends Jean at Claudia's wedding she remembers her taste for recklessness, and the two quickly become involved in a menacing romance. This suspenseful novel is at once delicate and bizarre in its portrait of obsession; Griner's spare prose never reveals why Steven and Jean behave as they do, but his story, like any true curio, is surprisingly haunting.

STEPS AND EXES, by Laura Kalpakian (Bard; $23). Celia Henry—generous, gritty, sexy, full of lyric musings, and funny as all get-out—is who Janis Joplin might have become if she'd lived long enough to retire to Puget Sound and run a perfect (almost) bed-and-breakfast. Kalpakian's theme in this novel is the durability of unconventional alliances—particularly between ex-lovers and among stepparents and stepchildren—and she's so entertaining a writer that it takes a while to realize how smart she is.

THE STORY OF A MILLION YEARS, by David Huddle (Houghton Mifflin; $23). Huddle's exacting portrait of two couples and their shared histories, desires, and secrets begins as Marcy Bunkleman recalls the affair she had as a teen-ager with Mr. Gordon, the husband of her mother's best friend. Soon, an increasingly sticky web of intersecting tales is spun out by Marcy, her dashing but vain husband (he trims his armpits), their pals Uta and Jimmy, and Mr. Gordon himself. What makes this first novel so touchingly creepy is not the many secrets it contains but the fact that the characters inevitably sniff out the truth about one another even as they believe their own secrets to be inviolable.

A STRANGER IN THE EARTH, by Marcel Theroux (Harcourt Brace; $23). Horace Littlefair, a country boy and an innocent, arrives in London to take a newspaper job and promptly gets involved with a saucy Polish girl, a star reporter named Harvard Machine, a Ugandan Tamil who cheats at Scrabble, a disillusioned journalist named Jocasta, various hipsters, a sex scandal, xenophobic politics, and a campaign to save the urban fox. Horace is a cheerful, engaging character (his stint as a gardening columnist is particularly endearing), and Theroux's first novel is quite cheerful and engaging itself.

THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS, by Robert V. Remini (Viking; $24.95). This small volume about a great victory magnificently conveys the ambiguity of war as both heroic and brutal. The book establishes the War of 1812 historically as our second War of Independence, and describes its climactic battle in the maze of cypress swamps and bayous along the winding Mississippi. Remini, an authority on Andrew Jackson and his era, unforgettably portrays individuals on both sides, and provides good maps to help us follow the action. While demonstrating the skills of America's amateur fighters, the author evokes sympathy for British enlisted men, veterans of the battle of Waterloo, who thought of themselves as "Wellington's heroes" and were led to disaster by foolhardy commanders.

SURREAL LIVES: THE SURREALISTS, 1917-1945, by Ruth Brandon (Grove; $32.50). Surrealism is now associated more with whimsy than with the lacerating and uncanny effects sought by the French poets who first formulated its principles. Brandon gives an account of the school's major practitioners, from Apollinaire to Dali; their flamboyant eccentricities and unconventional sexual entanglements prove a lively and absorbing complement to their work. At the book's heart lies the sad story of the humorless André Breton, indefatigable writer of manifestos, whose obsessive devotion to the movement ultimately alienated those closest to him.

CRYING: THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF TEARS, by Tom Lutz (Norton; $29.95). This original exploration of a familiar activity induces skepticism about theories and theoreticians: human beings are the only species that shed tears of emotion, but weeping plays different roles in different societies, and observers from one culture frequently misinterpret the meaning of tears in another. Lutz traces such cultural generalizations (which gender weeps, what purpose it serves) all the way from the fourteenth century B.C. to the present, and points out that no explanation accounts for the diversity of the evidence. The chapter on infant crying and adult response is particularly enlightening—both in the variety of responses and in the unreliability of child-care advice.

FOREVER ENGLAND, by Beryl Bainbridge (Carroll & Graf; $22). In 1986, the author conducted a series of interviews with members of six British families, three from the South and three from the North of England. Bainbridge writes as well as anyone alive, and here, by interspersing these diverse tales of joy and deprivation with memories of her own Liverpool childhood (the scent of a hedge, her father counting his loose change at the end of the day), she shows how inexorably a country imprints all its citizens, despite their private differences, with its collective dream.

WATER LIGHT TIME, by David Doubilet (Phaidon; $49.95). This book is a showcase for the work of *National Geographic's* David Doubilet, an heir to Cousteau and Cartier-Bresson, whose underwater photojournalism, with its painterly contortions of color and geometry, transcends mere reportage. In these pages, a New Guinea sand anemone glows like a novelty lamp from Spencer Gifts; U.F.O.-like manta rays gorge on plankton under refracted light from Hawaii's Kona Surf Hotel; a lone parrot fish stares down a cloud of Galápagos gray grunts; and garden eels sprout from the bed of the Red Sea like a field of slithery question marks.

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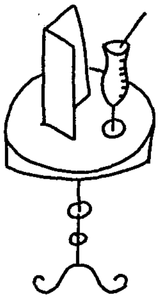
he wrote and revised incessantly—plays, poems, articles. He ran the Abbey Theatre, became a senator of the Irish Free State, disavowed his republican inclinations. This earned him Maud's bitter rebuke: "For your poetry you will be forgiven but not for that sin." By then, she had been relegated in Yeats's poems to a screaming hag on a wagonette, but, as Ted Hughes reminds us, "love is hard to kill." Two years before Yeats's death, she was again one of the Olympians.

Georgie was mother, wife, secretary, medium, and scribe, filling three thousand six hundred pages of automatic script. But eventually she grew tired, and the witch in her, which he admired, went into retreat. In the poem "Solomon and the Witch" he poses the supposition "The bride bed brings despair." It certainly brought fatigue. The magic began to wane, and automatic writing and conversation with the spirit world ceased as Georgie tried to run a household and rear her children. She became timorous. In a heart-rending episode, Maddox describes her as fortifying herself with "four gins" in order to pluck up the courage to read aloud a play she had written. Yeats's response was tepid. The first two scenes might be a play, he said, but "the third scene was worthless." Francis Stuart, the author, who had, to Yeats's chagrin, married Iseult, noticed a distrait Georgie at a party wearing one shoe and one slipper

THE Yeats children went to boarding school, and the damp tower was frequented less and less after Yeats and Georgie moved to a large house in Rathfarnam, where he could be insulated from the excitement of theatre and politics. For his health they began to winter abroad on the French and Italian Rivieras. In a letter from Canne Georgie wrote to the author Lennox Robinson in Dublin that for a long time she felt herself to be completely dispensable. Yeats's dreams had begun to be of young women "in full stream o Sapphoistic enthusiasm," and for rejuvenation he underwent an operation that was presumed to "increase production of male hormones." It was performed by Dr. Haire—a Harley Stree specialist who, Maddox tells us, had "Sexology, London" as his cable address To Yeats, the procedure heralded " strange second puberty,” while to Dublin gossipmongers it meant that he had gone “sex mad.”

There followed a succession of English ladies, some of whom had grand houses and the added excitement of “the bed's friendship.” Among them was the writer Ethel Mannin, a confidante of Dr. Haire, who restored Yeats, as he put it, “to the knowledge that he was not unfit for love.” Next, an actress and intending poet, Margot Ruddock, who had written him adulatory letters. These led to an introduction, assignations in which Yeats became the “old Pythagoras,” pleading with his young lover to open wide “those gleaming eyes.” Margot, unwisely, followed Yeats to Maorca, where he had gone with a swami. There she was politely rebuffed and threw herself out of a window, ending up, a few days later, in a hospital in Barcelona. Then came Lady Dorothy Wellesley, a former lover of Vita Sackville-West. She was a woman of aristocratic lineage and a face “like the most beautiful of Chinese lanthorns,” whose boyish figure aroused the “woman in him.” Her house in Sussex, redolent of Coole, was filled with bohemian guests, ncluding Dorothy's companion, Hilda Matheson. With her, as Brenda Maddox puts it, Yeats and Dorothy “evolved a form of sexual congress unique to heir requirements.” To embolden hings, they exchanged saucy verses in which Lady Dorothy alternated beween being lady of the house and a capitulating chambermaid. Whatever jealusy Georgie felt was either endured in ilence or blurred after a few gins.



YEATS'S last liaison had, for him, echoes of his first meeting with Maud, in 1889. He was intending to reurn home to Dublin from London, beause, as he wrote his wife, he missed the cat, the dog, Georgie, Anne, and . R. Higgins,” when destiny struck. oon he was writing home to ask that is sleeping pills be forwarded. Spiriual virtue, intense desire, and poetic inpiration were all packed into one fifty-hree-year-old “mannish woman,” Edith hackleton Heald, whose acerbic jouralistic articles questioned the necessity of the male species. Yet, secluded with Yeats in The Chantry House, in Sussex, or in a little flat in Holland Park, she became the ideal companion—one who fully understood that “those who create have to cultivate the wild beast in themselves.” He wrote to Georgie that in his sleep she had appeared as “a large, cold, cooked chicken.” In her reply, Georgie hoped that he had enjoyed his birthday in the company of Miss Shackleton. Later, to Miss Shackleton, she wrote of her sadness for Yeats's having to return “to this desolate place”—for which we might substitute “this desolate marriage.”

Some readers may resent the impropriety of the Maddox book, dwelling as it does on these various liaisons and flutters, when Yeats's poetry is on such a cosmic and oracular scale. But it is Maddox's point that these women were the triggers for the poet's mysterious and unflagging creative powers. Yeats himself believed that “the sexual principle lies at the heart of all behavior as well as history,” and in “Ribh in Ecstasy” he proclaimed it: “Godhead on Godhead in sexual spasm begot Godhead.” These loves, semi-loves, and infatuations were a spur to poetry, and while the roses, the “crimson meteors,” and the “osprey sorrow” of the early works still loom in his mind, the later poems are harder, more audacious and hieratic, taking himself and us to a brink beyond “human notes nor words” to dwell upon the soul's destiny.

Maddox gives a multilayered picture of this complex man, who was at once courteous and self-centered, gregarious, and spiritually and intellectually questing with a pithy intelligence in contrast to his loftiness. “War is a way of forgetting self, art a way of facing self,” he observed. She describes his great gift for friendship and his generosity to other writers, especially to J. M. Synge, who Yeats believed deserved to stand beside him when he was awarded the Nobel Prize. She notes his vacillating politics, his opposition to the stranglehold of the Catholic Church, and his unfortunate lurch to the right when, in 1933, he flirted with the Blueshirts, a quasi-fascist organization. Regrettably, he said, “How can we not feel emulous when seeing Hitler juggling with his

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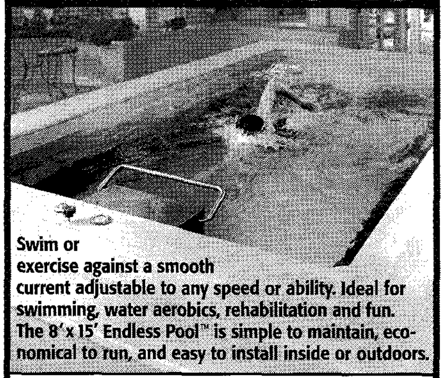

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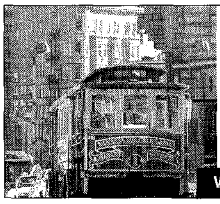

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sausage of stocking?" By concentrating on what might seem the more secular matters, Maddox's book makes us reflect on the staggering contrast between Yeats's life and his poetry, between his conscious and his unconscious, on the disparity of a mind that brooded on Leda's mystery yet pitched love's "mansion in the place of excrement."

WHEN Yeats, in his last months, wrote his own epitaph—"Cast a cold eye On life, on death. Horseman, pass by!"—had he ousted his skeletons, or was he, in the manner of his great hero, Cuchulain, "crazed from battle" yet determined to fight "horses of the sea"? We will never know the storms of this exulting and enigmatic man. What we do know is that, to the very end, he was writing, revising, and dictating.

His last days were spent in the Hôtel Idéal-Séjour, in Cap Martin, with Georgie, Dorothy, and Hilda in a nearby villa and Edith due to spend a month with him alone. His last poem, "The Black Tower," filled with images of a dark tomb, roaring wind, and old bones, was prophetic, and his depiction of "oath-bound men" trothed to a dead king is his possible verdict on blind political allegiance. Yeats fell into a com and died on January 28, 1939. Georgie in a last and salutary act of magnanimity, sat with Edith to keep vigil. Brend Maddox cites a Yeats play, "The Onl Jealousy of Emer," which was writte when he and Georgie were on thei honeymoon. In the play, Emer, the wif of Cuchulain, invites his favorite mistress, Eithne Inguba, to sit with her an watch over the corpse.

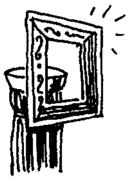
Since Yeats believed that peopl were united after death, it is only natural to imagine him in some patricia realm, presiding at a supper table, th "long glasses brimming with Muscatel." There would be Maud, Iseul Georgie, and Lady Gregory; then tha host of English ladies with names redolent of Noël Coward or Terence Rattigan—Olivia and Mabel and Ethel an Margot and Dorothy and Hilda an Edith, not forgetting Dr. Haire. Yeat said that "muses resemble women wh creep out at night and give themselves to unknown sailors and retur to talk of Chinese porcelain." Somehow I do not think that this cliqu would be talking of Chinese porcelain.

AT THE GALLERIES

THE UNVANQUISHED

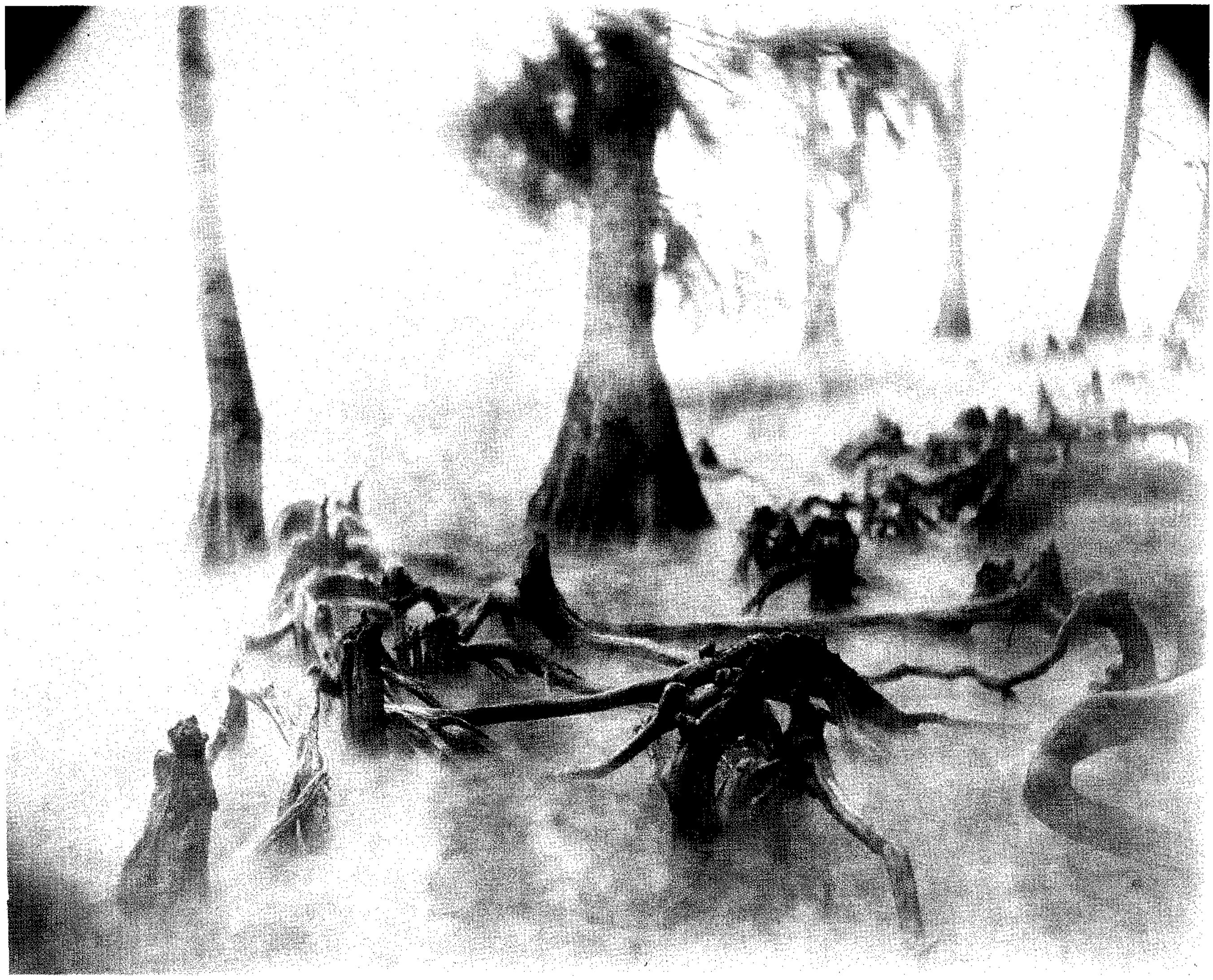
Sally Mann's portrait of the South.

BY HILTON ALS



THE "question" or "problem" of the American South, still, after all these years. With its fourteen states whose languorous names—Alabama, Kentucky, Georgia—recall real-life images that have now been reduced to B-movie clichés, such as the whipping of Negroes, horsebreeding, and cotillions, the South is like a landlocked island. No significant body of water separates it from the rest of the country, and yet as you travel through it you slowly, almost imperceptibly, begin to feel as if you had left everything you know behind; you fall into the amnesia peculiar to island life. Perhaps it's the air, the "ten air" that Elizabeth Hardwick, a nati Kentuckian, says is part of the regio gestalt. Or perhaps it's the tension colored people and white people li ing together in a marriage whose ci ilized veneer coats a history of dome tic violence.

There have been so many inte pretations of the South, and yet i still unreconstructed. It's a landsca choked with words, and its authors—Faulkner, Porter, McCullers, Percy—all write, write, write as if waging w against themselves. In a culture that e courages Christian humility and an intellectualism, thinking out loud



Sally Mann's "Untitled" (1998). Mann, with her unrepentant love of narrative, is a Faulkner of the lens.

tantamount to showing off, and becoming a writer or an artist is often an extravagant battle.

Many Southern artists take the predictable way out. Instead of telling the rest of the world—wherever that is—what their South means to them, they "write Southern"; wisteria, gumbo, and white trash clog every line or frame. And hose who attempt to tell the truth of their experience, to debunk the magnolia-strewn myths of the region by confronting its history of industrial and political folly, often do so in a defensive, almost hamed voice. The Georgia-born Catholic Flannery O'Connor was one of the irst Southern artists to pit her irony against her times. In her pre-civil-rights world, elders mourn a South that may never have existed: they can't see Tara or all the Pepsi-Cola signs. On the oad trip that takes place in O'Connor's story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," a woman is asked by her grandson what happened to the plantation he sees out the car window. "Gone With the Wind. Ha. Ha," she says. O'Connor threw down the gauntlet, challenging the artists who followed her not to fall back on Faulkner's tangled poeticism, Tennessee Williams's theatrical gothic, or Carson McCullers's romanticism, as a way of letting the South's "lyricism" speak for itself, letting the hard questions go unanswered. Among the few to rise to the challenge are the documentarist Ross McElwee and the writer Jayne Anne Phillips, whose stories in the collection "Black Tickets" are like postcards sent from the ruined island some call "down home."

IN her brilliant, troubling, and uneven second book of black-and-white photographs, "At Twelve: Portraits of Young Women" (1988), Sally Mann published what seems, at first, like a photographic version of a Flannery O'Connor story. Amid the alternately dreamy, cloying, and astute portraits of white girls and black girls struggling out of their bruised pubescent cocoons into a womanhood that they and their small environs seem barely prepared for—oh, to wear taffeta and pine for the love of a redneck man!—there is a picture of a colored girl lying, facing the camera, on a small four-poster bed. Her room is clearly a child's room, but neat, perhaps tidied that very morning for the arrival of the photographer, or for a social worker. The bedspread matches the curtains. Two shelves of the small bookcase have been given over to dolls, some white, some black, some with matted hair and others with mildly astonished or sad eyes, not unlike the girl's eyes, which show how resigned she is to carrying the weight of her

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soft, large breasts, encased in a striped polo shirt, and of her baby, dressed in white, who is sleeping next to her on the bed.

What makes this photograph distinctly Southern—and representative of Mann's best work—is the details: the dolls, the starkness of the very young child lying next to the older one, and the crooked cross painted on a small board nailed to the wall behind them. In this part of the world, all you need for Jesus to be present in the room is a crucifix. (Had this been a room in East Harlem, say, we would see not a cross but an actual portrait of Jesus; New Yorkers take the divine presence at face value.) The very light coming through the window, dusting the girl's hair, bouncing off the sleeping baby's forehead, feels celestial—like the light of judgment. But judging what? Is it Mann's intrusion (all photography is intrusion) or the subject's complicity? The light falls on the rare and intense, albeit unspoken, dialogue that is taking place between these two women—between a white Southern woman who has had every advantage (the forty-eight-year-old Mann grew up and lives in Lexington, Virginia, where her doctor father is something of a legend, not least because he was an atheist) and a black Southern woman who has been objectified before, with perhaps disastrous results.

In a long caption that appears with the portrait, Mann recalls, "Once we were driving along and my hair was wafting up toward the open sun-roof. She said that she used to wish she was white and had long red hair. I gripped the steering wheel a little more tightly and waited. But, she added, now she puts raspberry Kool-Aid on her hair to give it red highlights." Like any good photographer, Mann is drawn to the images that speak to her, that make her wait for revelation. She wants her photographs to tell stories. (All of Mann's published collections come with captions or forewords or afterwords, mostly written by the photographer herself.) This is not particularly unusual where she comes from; the Tennessee-born photographer William Eggleston, with whom Mann shares little stylistically, has called some of his pictures of the South "parts of a novel."

Mann doesn't condescend to her subjects, but one feels, at times, that she's trying too hard to identify with them. It is this impulse that signals Mann's divergence from O'Connor's greatness: despite all the criticism that has surrounded Mann's work—especially her portraiture—she refuses to be pitiless about the South, a place she loves, or about the people she depicts, whom she regards as aspects of herself. She, too, is a Southern girl, hanging out in bluegrass. And she grew up as she shows her children growing up, in her book "Immediate Family"—in swimming holes and summer cabins, with pee-stained beds and Popsicles and flesh rubbing against flesh. But one longs for her to remove just a little of the emotion from her picture-taking process, so that we can look at the South without tears or dogwood obscuring our view. Instead, again and again, she forces us to witness her compassion for her subjects. In Mann's world, time hurts us and we hurt it.

When Mann's pictures are of landscapes rather than of people, she overcompensates for the lack of narrative by making art with a capital "A." She drenches the work with historical references, and makes prints that are mean to be noticed—like those currently up a the Edwynn Houk Gallery. "Deep South Landscapes of Louisiana and Mississippi," which will be on view from September 23rd to November 6th, remind one not only of the wet-collodion process favored by the early masters o nineteenth-century landscape photography (whon Mann claims to be influenced by), but also of th great early French calotype made by Louis de Clerc and Paul Delondre. So much has gon into these images—they feel like an attempt to document the history of photography, as well as of the Southern gothic mode—that one gets the sens that, for Mann, photography must always be punishing to some degree: sh doesn't respect an image unless it's difficult to produce. Not only does she hav to prove herself a good Southern girl b feeling for her people, she also has t present herself as a serious artist, who i capable of thinking really hard abou her efforts. Perhaps this is a rebellio against the intellectual climate of her upbringing. Against its sexism, too. But the male domination of the photojournalistic world—which hasn't changed much since Diane Arbus was schlepping her prints up to the Museum of Modern Art for John Szarkowski to have a look-see—didn't stop Arbus from stripping photography of overt sentimentality and narrative.

For her most recent photographs, Mann has gone out into the field as boldly as any man could, but she's returned with something that doesn't entirely work. Her images are too obsessed with the South's picture-postcard "terrible beauty." It's not Faulkner we see here, but Faulkner's influence on Carson McCullers, which is, in turn, watered down in the early work of New Orleans-born Truman Capote. Looking at these prints, one thinks of the atmospheric opening of Capote's first novel, "Other Voices, Other Rooms," where "tiger lilies bloom the size of a man's head" and "luminous green logs . . . shine under the dark marsh water like drowned corpses." Rather than enjoying one of photography's most liberating qualities, its freedom from language, Mann begs for verbalization. Her framing and exposures and scratching of the negatives—so that her personality is literally imprinted on the images—encourage the suggestion that ghosts populate these studies. Each crumbling column is emblematic; each tree suggests a lynching; even the swirling water between trees alludes to slaves throwing bloodhounds off their scent. It is as if Toni Morrison's character Beloved were given a camera and told to wander about in her own ruined history.

Photography is the most immediately self-referential art there is. But people don't like to look at it much anymore. It lacks the immediate appeal of an installation. It doesn't move. Even those who spend some time looking at photographs today immediately want a context: Who is this? Why is this important? What can it say about me? Mann is, ultimately, an unreconstructed Southerner. She *wants* to be a mythologizer, a Faulkner of the lens. Her narrative instincts succeeded in the brilliant "Immediate Family," because those photographs did not aspire to be epic. The tone of those black-and-white

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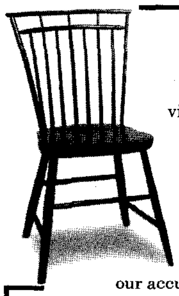

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pictures made them look like stills from a science-fiction movie, strange and familiar and ultimately alienating, like family. It was Mann's complicated intimacy that drew us into her world, her work as a diarist ruthless in her desire to present the people who live in the place she calls home; and it is that intimacy that she has forgone here in order to be considered important. ◆

THE THEATRE

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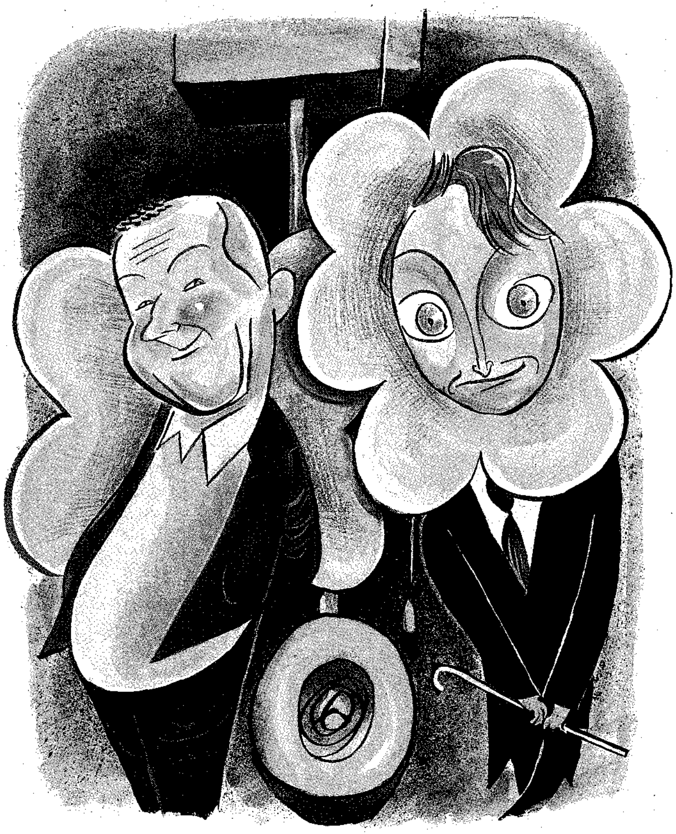
Vaudeville impeccably tailored to The Right Size.

BY JOHN LAHR

THE late, great English music-hall comedian Max Wall used to dismiss his own jokes by saying, "I don't tell any of them, 'cause I don't like them." Then he'd tell the one about his wife being a religious cook: "Everything she cooks is either a sacrifice or a burnt offering." Big laugh. Wall's tease—decrying a technique, then practicing it—came to mind last week as I was watching two new English vaudevillians, Sean Foley and Hamish McColl, known collectively as The Right Size, who, in the course of their Olivier Award-winning phantasmagoria, "Do You Come Here Often?," expertly directed by Jozef Houben (at P.S. 122), keep berating each other about the old gags. "I can't believe you're doing that sort of material!" says McColl, the bug-eyed posh one, in tails and a turquoise tie for the occasion, as he watches his proletarian partner, in whiteface and bowler, bring the house down with a truly bad mime of looking for a door in four imaginary walls. Of course, these shrewd players know that in comedy what's unsaid is as important as what's said; behind their delicious idiosyncratic act is a cunning exploration of frivolity's refusal to suffer.

We first discover the hapless duo bound together and gagged at the base of a toilet; they've been hijacked by some inexplicable magic, which they call the Dark Forces, into a bathroom—a world of pink laundry hampers, blue shower curtains, and yellow plastic ducks. Together, they try to reconstruct just how they came to be trapped here for twenty-five years. "Stuck" is the first word out of their mouths in the opening song; then, like Max Wall, they show the audience their game and invite us into their universe of caprice. "If only we could sing / We'd sing a song with singing in it," they sing through the tape on their mouths (which proves to be a trompe-l'oeil). They sashay around the stage, singing "If only we could walk / We'd walk around the room like this." Although the artifice has all sorts of existential overtones (so many of our fetters turn out to be imaginary), the bathroom is not some symbolic Beckettian landscape but an arena to exhibit the comedian's knowledge of living in the moment. In a tasty seventy-five minutes of music-hall hokum, The Right Size, who were influenced by the maverick French mime and teacher Jacques Lecoq, prove his adage: "Be quiet; play; and theatre will come."

The Right Size's flimflammery has echoes of the Old Guard of English funnymen: the inept bravado of Tommy Cooper and his "magic tricks"; the larky charm of Morecambe and Wise; the whimsy of Ken Dodd; the sass of Dame Edna Everage. In the old days, The Right Size would have been called "knockabout"; nowadays, "surreal" is the adjective of choice. "Good news! I found the door. Let's get out of here," McColl says, running onstage with a door. In this folderol, the door becomes variously, a bathroom, a battlefield, and a bludgeon, with which Foley is frequently clobbered. The Right Size' high jinks are at once an homage to and a reinvention o the old-timers' shtick. Th Right Size take pratfalls but with a difference. When this century was new, pratfalls were images of resilience the comedians bounced bac from the blows of an intractable but very real world. Now with so much of our realit internalized by technology the culture's sense of the rea has become more problematic, and the pratfall resonates in a new way. Wit each pulverizing blow, Fole and McColl alternately remember and forget the stor of how they got into thi jam. In fact, neither can ge the story straight; they can find or finish the plot. The slapstick becomes a meta



Foley and McColl: New loons on the block.

phor for this discombobulation: an image not of hope but of incoherence. The point is underscored when they attempt vaudeville's most traditional stage picture of harmony: the soft-shoe. With canes in hand and with their heads bouncing on their necks like dashboard figurines, The Right Size swagger delightfully through a series of half steps and shuffles, two cogs in a smoothly running fun machine. Then, trying for the big finish, they fall on their faces. Every attempt at order ends in fiasco.

The Right Size's humor is piquant: smart and dopey. "Quick! There's someone coming! Hide! Hide!" McColl says at the beginning of the play. They both ace for the shower. "That's *my* place!" McColl says, elbowing Foley aside. Thanks a lot!" Foley says, and goes to he bureau, where he sticks his head in drawer. They have a lot of fun tweakng the conventions of theatrical storyelling. Here, when a character wants o talk to the audience, he pirouettes lownstage while the other is upstage aiming speech. The passage of time is measured by beards. When the story umps decades in a few lines, the duo wear three beards at once, to suggest what period of life they're in. At one oint, Foley, after sulking in the shower or six weeks, emerges with a beard own to his knees only to discover that n the interim McColl has written a ook on toilet paper. "I told you you ere slipping, way back *then!*" Foley ays, indicating a place high up on his eard. Gradually, a loony sight gag has ecome a private language that the auience can decode.

The Right Size understand that ords are only an embellishment on he design of movement, which in this how is sensationally wacky. There is oley's Milk Dance, a kind of St. Vitus' pasm brought on by drinking a carton five-year-old milk. There is their Bee nd Flower palaver, with Foley wearng bee's wings and McColl dressed a flower. "Now, come on, check my highs for pollen," Foley says to the rotesting McColl, whom he calls etal. My personal favorite is Foley's sault on an egg called Evan. In a moent of cabin fever, McColl imagines nch as a living thing. He wants to ve the egg; Foley, of course, wants to eat it. "Now, come on, Evan, test flight," he says to the egg. "Flap, flap, flap!" He carries the egg to the bureau, where he deposits it in what looks like a wire egg cup hooked over the top of the mirror. Having planted the idea of the bird in the audience's mind, the team waits almost to the end for the payoff.

"We need nutrition," McColl says. "We must eat Evan!" Foley says. They battle to reach Evan in his aerie. Finally, McColl emerges victorious from behind the bureau wearing an Egg Hat, a kind of helmet buckled under his chin, with Evan balanced three feet above his head, wobbling on a wire contraption that looks like an Eiffel Tower egg cup. Foley, not to be outdone, appears wearing "the deadly Hammer Hat," a helmet with a small, springy hammer attached, which he maneuvers by nodding his head. He also carries a frying pan. They career around the stage with the bobbing hammer trying to smash the bouncing egg. Both Evan and the audience crack up. If there's a sillier, more inspired stage picture in contemporary comedy, I don't know it.

In the omnipotent world of play, life's anguish is turned upside down. At the finale, the duo sing a jaunty song that makes the point about frivolity's stage-managed invulnerability:

We're both dead
But we're still here
We've been kippered like a chicken
  and the marinade was fear.

Each verse is a list of hurts and humiliations, ending with a triumphal defensive refrain: "We're both dead / And you can't compete with that." Outwitting the Dark Forces is comedy's job description. Foley goes out through the shower; McColl dives through the top of the bureau. His legs waggle for a split second; then he's gone. The secret of great comedy, Chaplin said, is entrances and exits. The secret is safe with The Right Size, who are exhilarating new masters of an old zany art. ♦

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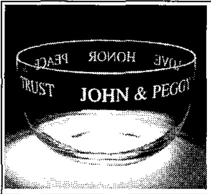

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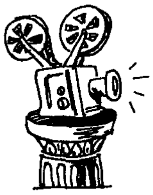
The isolation of a pitcher; erotic adventure in San Francisco and in France.

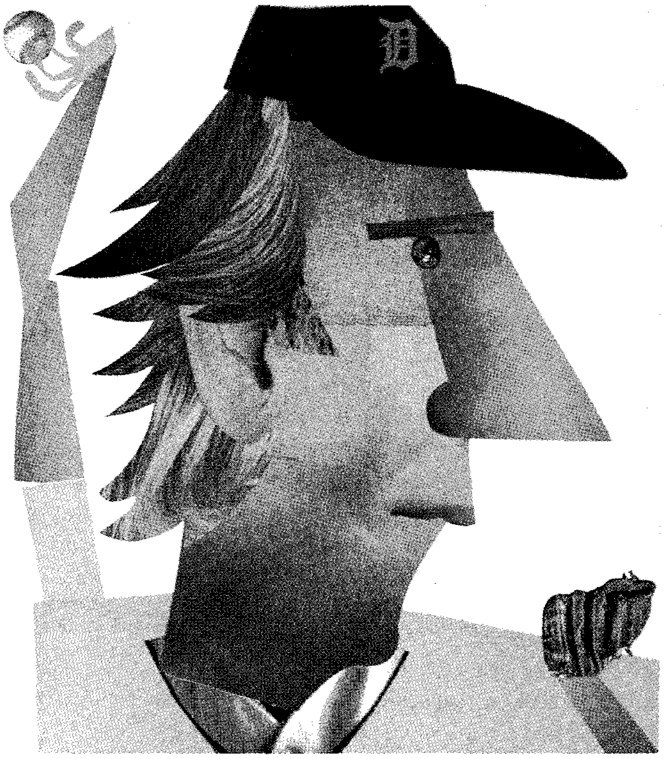
BY DAVID DENBY



AT the beginning of "For Love of the Game," the aging right-hander Billy Chapel (Kevin Costner) discovers that his team has been sold and that the love of his life is leaving him. He's been poleaxed twice in one day and, not only that, his shoulder is sore and he's in New York (to play the Yankees), where, according to this movie, everyone resembles a snarling dog. Despite these indignities, Billy, a tough customer—a champion—pulls himself together and takes the mound. For nineteen years, he has pitched for the same team, the Tigers, and even though the game is meaningless, a professional ballplayer doesn't lie down at the Stadium. His pride is at stake, and this could be the final outing of his career: maybe he should hang it up. By the time Billy gets to the mound, he's been turned into a combination of stoic warrior and Hemingway's old man in the sea, fighting the great fish. "For Love of the Game" combines baseball lore and popular feminist romance, and the noble clichés pile up like damp logs and give off a sweet-smelling smoke. Billy starts to pitch, and, sure enough, at the age of forty, he's working on a perfect game. He struggles with his vanishing fastball and his aching shoulder, and as Vin Scully, that indefatigable master of announcing-booth bombast, narrates the game, Billy reviews his life, especially his relationship with the stout-hearted Jane (Kelly Preston), who has ambitions of her own. His anguish mounts toward a double climax—the pain-ridden end of the game and Jane's getting on a plane to London.

The structure of "For Love of the Game" is overdetermined, as the psychoanalysts might put it—reinforced with screenwriting tropes perhaps sixty years old. Baseball announcers like to say now that certain games seem to have a "scripted" quality (with dramatic reversals, irony, etc.), but only an actual movie script could feature an outfielder who first allows a ball to bounce off his head and then makes a brilliant catch that saves the game. Directed by Sam Raimi and written by Dana Stevens, who adapted Michael Shaara's novel, "For Love of the Game" goes backward and forward in time, but it still feels constricted. Every idea and emotion is repeated again and again: the movie is stretched out like baseball-card bubblegum—it's at least twenty minutes too long for what it has to say. And yet, despite the old-Hollywood movieishness of the whole conception, I was absorbed by "For Love of the Game." This confident work of popular entertainment is perceptive and shrewd about a number of things, large and small.

The movie sets up a paradox: a great athlete needs to be hard-souled and isolate at times—trusting only himself—but that very hardness and isolation can destroy his happiness as a man. On the mound during the game, Billy sends angry little memoranda to himself about the batters he faces. He has a long history with many of these hitters, and we hear muttered, intimately nasty comments from pitch to pitch. Billy is alone out there, and when he's injured he's even lonelier, needing no one around but the people who can help him get back on the mound—people he can use and neglect. He is always cutting himself off. As an actor, however, Kevin Costner, who understands this role perfectly, plugs himself in. When Costner, who is forty-four, pitches, he doesn't raise his left leg high the way Jim Palmer or Nolan Ryan would, but, all in all, his form isn't ba and he's got a pitcher's intimidatin scowl and a veteran athlete's habit relaxing in the midst of great tensio After Costner's dour misadventures i "Waterworld" and "The Postman" an "Message in a Bottle," he's more tha effective in this movie. He plays a st pitcher by drawing on what he kno as a star actor. Talking to fans and hot clerks, he dominates with an easy char while withholding any part of himse that's important; and when he abrupt forces his will on the team's manag or on his catcher—"I matter mo than you, buster," his manner says- one hears the unmistakable sound o movie star throwing his weight arou



Taking the mound: Kevin Costner works on a perfect game.

The movie asks: How do you act w a woman when you're used to getti what you want from everyone? Ja Aubrey (Preston), a young magazi writer and aspiring editor in New Yo likes Billy, sleeps with him, lives w him, but keeps leaving him, because doesn't want to be taken for granted an athlete's girl, and Costner's express of bafflement when he can't handle he he runs out of words—is comical touching. "For Love of the Game" fe at times, like a "feminist" *Cosmo* pi ("Touching All the Bases") that has b pushed a little further than one expe Jane is so guarded against an insult to ride that she cheats herself out of hapiness; and Billy lets her slip through his ingers because in times of trouble he eeds to enter his cave. Sam Raimi, who s best known for his horror films and for he stark melodrama "A Simple Plan," hows an engaging flair for popular ronance, though the damn movie won't let o. As Billy pitches, and remembers, he nd Jane fight and make up in episodes hat are well written but redundant and xasperating—God, let it end!—until Billy throws his final pitch and Vin Scully if only he would) shuts up forever.

IN the sharp-tongued yet romantic American independent film "Guine-ere," a smart San Francisco girl, Harper Sarah Polley), escapes an unhappy family of lawyers and a career at Harvard Law School and takes up instead with Connie Fitzpatrick (Stephen Rea), a bohemian Mission District photographer who seduces her by telling her that she's n artist. Superbly written and directed y Audrey Wells (who wrote the supple omic screenplay for "The Truth About Cats and Dogs"), this movie suggests hat sexual and intellectual mentorship, oined together, become overwhelming or any girl of normal ego. Harper can't esist, and Wells creates her love for Connie boldly, tenderly, and with surassing candor. Connie, who is about fty, is never idealized. No one among is drinking friends or his ex-lovers nagines that this man, who supports imself by taking wedding pictures, is n unappreciated genius or a saint. He's con artist and a practiced seducer—here has been a whole string of young omen before Harper—but Connie devers the goods, offering young women he attention they need more than anything else. Stephen Rea's sorrowful gaze nd soft, drawling voice—the Irish lilt as never been sexier—gentles the oung Canadian actress Sarah Polley, ho has some real fire behind her lovely es. Rea doesn't try to hide Connie's nity or the physical decrepitude he's llen into from too many years of slingg the bull in North Beach bars. Right o to the fanciful ending (which is a istake), the movie has a pleasing and eady intelligence. Much of it is underayed, though there's one scene that's a nner: Harper's furiously unhappy and castic mother (Jean Smart) drops in Connie's loft, and tells him off so tally and accurately that she leaves a chill behind her from which the relationship never recovers. The movie is framed by Harper's retrospective narration, and the bittersweet tone of it is just right: This is the love affair I had years ago with an impossible man, and I was never more miserable or more happy.

ONE of the extraordinary advantages of growing up French is that you can be absurd without ever quite knowing it. In Catherine Breillat's sexually explicit "Romance," a dark teardrop of a girl, Marie (Caroline Ducey), lives with a handsome young model, Paul (Sagamore Stevenin), who announces that he has lost interest in her. Paul sits naked in bed, as silent as a sphinx. Is he on a power trip? Is he gay? We're never told, but after Marie gives up trying to rouse him she drags herself without apparent pleasure through one sordid sex situation after another while intoning such thoughts to herself as "I like it to be anonymous. It's my purity—more metaphysical." Humorless and fantastically self-absorbed, Marie seems to have nothing in her head but desire. This, of course, has been true for all of us at one point or another, but perhaps only in a French movie would a woman embrace sexual experimentation only to attain an enormous *pensée*. Catherine Breillat writes lines that might have been considered daring in a minor Left Bank novel fifty years ago; at the same time, she lacks talent for what is normally called directing. Abrupt but static, pornographic but unarousing, "Romance" can't compare to such recent French movies as Erick Zonca's "Dreamlife of Angels" and Olivier Assayas's "Late August, Early September," both of which deal explicitly with the perversity of female desire. To take "Romance" seriously, you would have to accept the tremendous French solemnity about masochism, which is presented here as a wondrous gift to women's sexual self-expression. Marie, it turns out, finds happiness with her boss, a middle-aged schoolmaster, who offers to dominate her. He fiddles politely with the gag, the mask, and the whatnot, and then makes such a botch of tying her up (he tries it a different way the next time) that in the end you feel relieved he's not a taxidermist or a shoemaker. "Why do men who disgust us appeal to us more than men who respect us?" asks Marie. The awful thing is that Catherine Breillat thinks she knows the answer. ◆

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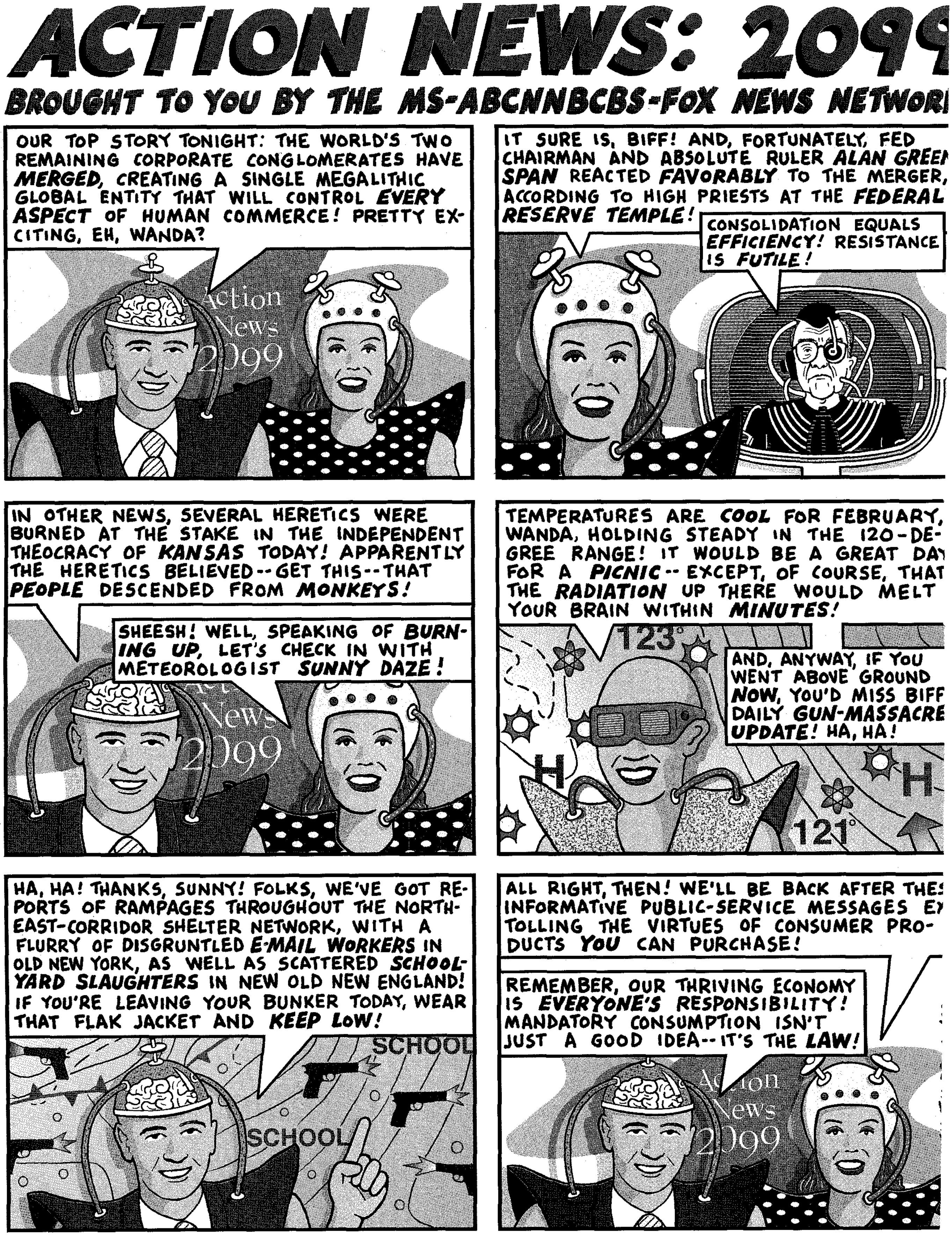
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IT SURE IS, BIFF! AND, FORTUNATELY, FED CHAIRMAN AND ABSOLUTE RULER *ALAN GREENSPAN* REACTED *FAVORABLY* TO THE MERGER, ACCORDING TO HIGH PRIESTS AT THE *FEDERAL RESERVE TEMPLE!*
CONSOLIDATION EQUALS *EFFICIENCY!* RESISTANCE IS *FUTILE!*
IN OTHER NEWS, SEVERAL HERETICS WERE BURNED AT THE STAKE IN THE INDEPENDENT THEOCRACY OF *KANSAS* TODAY! APPARENTLY THE HERETICS BELIEVED--GET THIS--THAT *PEOPLE* DESCENDED FROM *MONKEYS!*
SHEESH! WELL, SPEAKING OF *BURNING UP*, LET'S CHECK IN WITH METEOROLOGIST *SUNNY DAZE!*
News 2099
TEMPERATURES ARE *COOL* FOR FEBRUARY, WANDA, HOLDING STEADY IN THE 120-DEGREE RANGE! IT WOULD BE A GREAT DAY FOR A *PICNIC*--EXCEPT, OF COURSE, THAT THE *RADIATION* UP THERE WOULD MELT YOUR BRAIN WITHIN *MINUTES!*
123°
AND, ANYWAY, IF YOU WENT ABOVE GROUND *NOW*, YOU'D MISS BIFF'S DAILY *GUN-MASSACRE UPDATE!* HA, HA!
H
H
121°
HA, HA! THANKS, SUNNY! FOLKS, WE'VE GOT REPORTS OF RAMPAGES THROUGHOUT THE NORTHEAST-CORRIDOR SHELTER NETWORK, WITH A FLURRY OF DISGRUNTLED *E-MAIL WORKERS* IN OLD NEW YORK, AS WELL AS SCATTERED *SCHOOLYARD SLAUGHTERS* IN NEW OLD NEW ENGLAND! IF YOU'RE LEAVING YOUR BUNKER TODAY, WEAR THAT FLAK JACKET AND *KEEP LOW!*
SCHOOL
SCHOOL
ALL RIGHT, THEN! WE'LL BE BACK AFTER THESE INFORMATIVE PUBLIC-SERVICE MESSAGES EXTOLLING THE VIRTUES OF CONSUMER PRODUCTS *YOU* CAN PURCHASE!
REMEMBER, OUR THRIVING ECONOMY IS *EVERYONE'S* RESPONSIBILITY! MANDATORY CONSUMPTION ISN'T JUST A GOOD IDEA--IT'S THE *LAW!*
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